

Sons of the Covenant

A Tale of London Jewry

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BY
SAMUEL GORDON

Author of "LESSER DESTINIES,"
ETC., ETC.

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THE PAID INVESTIGATOR INVITED HIS TWO COMPANIONS TO ENTER. (See page 26.)

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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PART I

CHAPTER I

"DIAMOND," said his wife.

"What's up now?" came the grudging answer from over the top of a newspaper.

"I want you to do a little something for me."

"You and your little somethings—just the proper thing for a man after twelve hours' work down at the Deptford Meat Market, killing seventeen bullocks. . . ."

Mr. Diamond was a "ritual slaughterer," whose office it is to make beef, mutton, or veal out of live cattle for his coreligionists' consumption, in accordance with Mosaic traditional precept.

"Seventeen bullocks? Well, nobody's going to make you the eighteenth; so you needn't bellow like that," broke in Mrs. Diamond with her Thursday-morning voice.

"I ain't bellowing, Becky, my dear," remonstrated Mr. Diamond, who had allowed himself by a rapt perusal of an interesting libel case to forget who his interlocutor was.

Mrs. Diamond, it was notorious, possessed three sizes of voice. Size number one she reserved exclusively for the wife of the local M. P., a coreligionist, with whom she came into contact at election times, and whom she had inveigled into the belief that Mr.

Diamond was a man of influence in the constituency. Size number two she employed in speaking to ordinary people—her husband included. The third size, the one referred to above as her Thursday-morning voice, stood her in good stead while battling with extortionate fishmongers for her Sabbath fish; but she also made it serve her on occasions when things were not going entirely her way, especially with Mr. Diamond; and then Mr. Diamond answered with humility—that is, if he answered at all.

“Why can’t you do a thing without first arguing about it?” continued Mrs. Diamond, somewhat mollified. “Don’t I do enough for you? I wonder what sort of a reputation you’d have, if I didn’t use all my spare time going round to people and telling them you’re the best husband in the world? And they believe me, don’t you make a mistake; I don’t leave off talking till they do. Wish I could believe it myself.”

“Wish you could, Becky, my dear,” echoed Mr. Diamond, piously.

“Shocking, the way you put yourself out to make me—eh?” And Mrs. Diamond exhaled irony from every pore. “Diamond, I know what you’re after. You want to make yourself precious. You want to show me—fling it down my throat, even if I choke over it—what a treasure it is for a woman that never had no schooling herself to have a man to do her a bit of writing at times—if he wants to, that is. Don’t you fear; I can see your little game. One of these days you think I’ll talk myself dead begging a favor from you, and then perhaps you won’t mind writing something to be put on my tombstone. . . .”

“But I’ll write it this instant, Becky, my dear,”

"What, the tombstone?"

"How can you be so stupid?—the letter, of course. Quick, I'm ready."

Mr. Diamond had hastily extracted a sheet of note-paper from the table-drawer, and sat, his pen as it were cocked like a trigger, ready for the word of command. But the torrent of dictation which, judging from past experience, he expected to deluge him was not forthcoming. Instead, Mrs. Diamond seemed possessed by a strange hesitation.

"I wish you wouldn't be so sharp—you've quite flustered me," she observed, glaringly inconsistent.

"Take your time, my dear; I know how hard it is to start a letter properly."

"Who said it was a letter?" asked Mrs. Diamond.

"You did, didn't you?"

"Of course you always know better what I mean than I do myself."

"Becky, my dear, you haven't made up any poetry, have you?"

"Poetry? Stuff! Diamond, listen to me: I want you to commit a forgery."

Here Mr. Diamond ought to have exclaimed, "My prophetic soul," but unfortunately he was not acquainted with the quotation, which was a pity. It would have been such a nice way of expressing the little thrills of vague apprehension at the circumlocutory fashion in which his wife had preferred her request—a fashion varying so signally from all precedent. But if he could not cap the situation with any apt quotation, he did something similar: he got up and fitted his hat on his head.

"Why! where are you off to?" exclaimed Mrs. Diamond.

"To the police station," replied Mr. Diamond calmly. "You ask me to commit a forgery; that means the thing is as good as done. I may as well start doing my ten years as soon as possible."

Mrs. Diamond sat silent, awed by her husband's loyalty to the laws of his country or by the patent tribute to her domestic ascendancy—she did not exactly know which. To solve her indecision she got into a temper.

"What a hurry he's in to make me out a piece of God-help-us! There's an opinion to have of your wife that's worried and fretted and slaved alongside of you twenty-seven years come next Passover. Now out with it—what d'you think I'm more of, a rogue or a fool? You won't say—I dare say you won't; you know when you're well off. Forgery—prison—Becky Diamond. To heaven I want to bring you, and you won't let me!"

"I do want to let you, but not just yet," replied her husband, who, of course, had no intention whatever of gratuitously delivering himself over to justice, but was fain to utilize the incident as an excuse for stepping across the way to take a hand in a "friendly game."

Mrs. Diamond listened in vain for the least little tinge of flippancy in his reply. But Mr. Diamond's luck held good that day, and his wife conjectured from his "not just yet" a reverent reluctance to part with this life, which could only be construed into an indirect compliment to her. Thus appeased, she came at once to the business in hand, wherein a square printed form she submitted to him apparently was to take a leading part.

"Fill that in," she dictated.

"Board of Guardians for the Relief of the Jewish Poor," read Mr. Diamond. "First Application."

"Who's applying? As you say it's to be a forgery, it can't be myself."

Mrs. Diamond bit dead a sarcastic comment on his powers of inference.

"No, not yourself, it's Mrs. Lipcott," she replied instead.

"Mrs. Lipcott?" Mr. Diamond laid aside the pen. "Why doesn't she make her youngsters write it? They're through the sixth standard, or one of 'em is."

"Because she doesn't know anything about it; it's my own idea, and I am doing it on my own little hook. See?"

"Can't say I do. Don't think you've got the right to make people paupers behind their backs," answered Mr. Diamond quite resolutely.

"Better they should make corpses of themselves, eh? And that's what she'll do; on my blessed word, she'll wash herself dead before she's a year older. Perhaps you don't know she goes to bed with mustard plasters on her arms?"

"How should I? But even that doesn't explain why you should take this responsibility on yourself."

"Yes, it does," snapped Mrs. Diamond; "she's one of those stupid persons you've got to protect against themselves. She'll work and work and not once ask what the clock says. And what'll be the end? Another bed will be wanted at the Home for Incurables, and her two youngsters will be in the scramble for the orphan asylum, and there'll be more charity appeals, and more money'll be wanted, and—I wonder where

the community would be if there wasn't myself and one or two others to remember that 'a stitch in time saves nine.' Perhaps you've dawdled long enough now?"

"Oh, I'm quite ready, but—just a moment. Suppose you put the case like that to the woman herself?"

"Put it to her? I've rammed it down her throat."

"Well?"

"She shakes her head and smiles. If she'd at least answer me, and make a big fuss about wanting to be independent, and then go begging on the quiet! But she doesn't, she just smiles, and lets you guess anything you like. That's what I call pride peeping out through broken boot-tips. Who doesn't help herself from the Soup Kitchen during the winter? Mrs. Lipcott. Who doesn't go to the Thursday grocery distribution? The identical. Who doesn't let her children take the boots and corduroys that's to be had for the asking at the school? I needn't mention the name. That's the kind of creature she is, and—you'll make me choke, Diamond; haven't you started yet?"

"Why, I'm starting as fast as I can. Where's that Evening News? It's all right," he replied hastily. "I'm only looking for the date. Oh, by the way, how do you think the Board can help her?"

"By lending or giving her a few pounds to open a little all-sorts shop with. Then, as the boys grow up, they'll help her or get apprenticed to a trade, and she'll yet have a chance of knowing what it's like to have gray hairs on her head. It's a sensible plan, or it wouldn't be me that had thought of it. Diamond, will you or won't you?"

In genuine trepidation Mr. Diamond applied him-

self to his task. He called out the queries by which the applicant is catechized, and Mrs. Diamond supplied the requisite answers. As to her accuracy there could be no possible doubt, because she notoriously made it a duty to acquaint herself intimately with the life-histories of all who came into her personal cognizance. Cupboard skeletons she had made a specialty.

The details of information thus collected formed a tolerable biography of Mrs. Lipcott to date. From them it appeared that she was thirty-four years old, that she had been a widow for half a decade, that she had two male children aged thirteen and twelve respectively. There were also items concerning place of abode, occupation, genealogy, the last to the effect that she derived herself from foreign parents, and had immigrated at the age of four. It also transpired that she had no relatives living in London or, in fact, anywhere else.

Mrs. Diamond did not desist till she had the document read to her four times, and had seen it safely enveloped. It was to be posted first thing next morning. She generously consented to defray postage out of her housekeeping allowance. By that time it was ten o'clock. Desperately Mr. Diamond tried to summon up courage to ask for furlough to snatch an hour's transport from the hazard of the card-game across the way; but at the critical moment his heart failed him, and, as the nearest alternative, he went and smothered his chagrin under the bedclothes.

CHAPTER II

THRUST away somewhere amid the architectural tangle of the Spitalfields district is Narrow Alley. It bears a disconsolate, dumbfounded look, like that of a child which has lost its way among a crowd, and its score or so of hovel houses seem to be spending their time all day in manufacturing apologies for surviving. The top stories on either side sloped yearningly forward towards one another, and had the dwellings been but a little taller, the alley would have been a tunnel; as it was, the daylight managed to squeeze itself through the slit by dint of much exertion, which reduced it to the very shadow of itself.

Just at present that did not so much matter, because it was evening, the same evening, in fact, whereon Mrs. Lipcott's application for relief was being fabricated by the Diamond couple. The interior of Mrs. Lipcott's house in Narrow Alley, of which house she shared tenancy with an infinite number of other families, could not be said to disprove violently her fitness to rank as a recipient of charity. Its furniture was severely simple, with a leaning toward the antique and a desire to resolve itself once more into its constituent elements. But besides its decrepit chairs, beds, and table, the room contained healthier and more able-bodied effects in the shape of the two little boys figuring in the report as aged thirteen and twelve respectively. As far as the consumptive-looking lamp-light enabled one to be sure of one's impression, it



"AIN'T I PEELING AS HARD AS I CAN?"

appeared that these two little boys were engaged in preparing a meal. The angry crackle of seething oil tended to give color, as well as odor, to the conjecture.

"Hurry up there, Leuw," said Phil, the younger of the brothers, "mother'll be here presently."

"All right; ain't I peeling as hard as I can?" came the reply, somewhat gruffly. "Anybody would think it was my fault we started so late."

"I don't," asseverated Phil.

But Leuw would not be deprived of the right to exculpate himself in detail.

"Think I've been larking about all the two hours I've been away? I'd like to hear anybody say so. Hanging round the 'tater shop, that's what I've been, waiting for old Solomon to go indoors. He doesn't give us any tick, you know, the old miser. Well, at last he changes off with his missis, and you bet I took my chance quick enough. She lets me run up to a shilling now—used to be sixpence; getting up in the world, ain't we, Phil?"

"Looks like it," said Phil dubiously.

"Well, then, don't tell me to hurry up, when it ain't any fault of mine that things are a bit behindhand."

"But I never said . . ." protested Phil, blankly.

"Shut up! Who said you did? Think I've been 'pologizing to you for being late? Don't you believe it. Never seems to have entered your head, though I can't call it a fat head—but there are times when a fellow has got to make excuses to himself."

"Oh!" said Phil, beginning to catch his drift. "Now, if I hadn't got those 'taters, and there would have been nothin' for mother's supper, not to mention

yours, think it would have been any excuse for me that old Solomon wouldn't budge from the shop? Not a bit of it. Because something inside would have told me that I'm the—the—what's the word? Oh, yes, the responsible party, being the head of the family by right of being the oldest man in it, though I've got to let mother do the money earning till I've left school."

"And that will be in a fortnight," supplemented Phil.

"In a fortnight," echoed Leuw, with a certain grim emphasis.

"Are you sorry?" asked Phil, almost timidly.

"Not exactly sorry, but sort of—and you'll just keep it to yourself, do you hear?—sort of frightened like. It seems to me I'll have to do all my thinking for myself, 'stead of letting the teacher do it for me. It's enough to make one feel a bit anxious, isn't it, Phil?"

"Still, most people have got to start doing their thinking some time or other. I've done so myself already," replied Phil re-assuringly.

"Get away—I don't mean your kind of it, which is just dreaming with your eyes open. No dreaming for me, thank you. The way I'm going to do my thinking is to take hold of my brain with both hands, and worry it till I find out what the world's like, and what a fellow can get out of it, and how much he's got to give in exchange. That'll be a pretty hard day's work, what do you say?"

Phil gave him a puzzled look, and was very glad to find from Leuw's absent air that he was not really expected to express an opinion; and presently Leuw continued:

"No, I ain't sorry, and what concerns the funk, I haven't got it so very badly either. You know that door-knocker on the last house across the way? Well, when the moon shines on it, it looks like a grinning boggy, and I've got to go close up to it to know it's only a stupid old knocker. Strikes me in the same way the world looks a bit dangerous from a distance. I'll be all right once I'm close enough to look it in the face. And then I'm going to fight it."

"But you'll be very careful, Leuw, won't you," asked Phil apprehensively.

"I'll try not to hurt it," replied Leuw, jauntily, "because, mind you, I think I'm pretty tough. Do you know, Phil, I've been sort of feeling myself grow up for the last couple of years, though I didn't show it so much outside, because there's half a dozen chaps in the class what's got longer legs than me. Many a time I seem to myself a cheat and a humbug, knowing I had no business to go monkeying around the playground with a pack of kids. Thank God, I'll be able to feel more honest in a fortnight."

He paused and relapsed into a reverie, during which Phil bestowed his undivided attention on the potato chips in the saucepan, till Leuw finally voiced the conclusion which he had been driving at with the words: "No, it isn't at all nice."

"What isn't?" asked Phil, a little scared, thinking that the remark might apply to his cooking.

"Living on tick isn't. It doesn't do you any good; one-half of you feels choked and the other half starved, and you never know which way it's going to be the death of you. That's why I grew up in such a hurry, because I must start paying cash before it's got time to kill one of us."

"I don't like tick either," rejoined Phil thoughtfully, "but I wouldn't mind being a boy all my life."

"Oh, indeed, what for?"

"So that I needn't leave school."

"Yes, I've got that down on the list—with the other things."

"Hope the total won't come too big," said Phil anxiously.

"The bigger the better: I'll roll up my shirt sleeves a bit higher, that's all."

"Perhaps I could help you."

"Yes, by keeping out of the way. I'd have to waste half my time in seeing that nothing happens to you. You tackle the books, and I'll tackle the people. Books take some fighting, too."

"I know, but I'll roll up my shirt sleeves as well."

"Right you are, young 'un; you'll do. Hurray, only one more!" said Leuw as his knife uncoated the last of the potatoes. Just as he finished cutting it small, something seemed to happen, for he got up rather quickly, and looked searchingly about the room.

"What do you want?" asked Phil, following his gaze.

"Bit of rag—notched my finger, by way of a wind-up. Ah, here it is."

"Bleeding much—is it?"

"Buckets; the room will swim in a minute," joked Leuw.

"Hadn't you better hold it under the pump downstairs?" asked Phil, his anxiety only partially allayed.

"Good idea, that. Then I shan't want the rag, and mother needn't know," replied Leuw, hurrying off.

"Hold a minute, I'm coming with you."

"What? afraid to stop in the room alone?"

"Not that," faltered Phil, "but you see I'll be by myself with the chips, and you might think perhaps. . . ."

"Oh, might I?" said Leuw, breaking in on his embarrassment. "I 'spose that's a nice polite way of calling yourself brother to a blackguard and a greedy-guts. Take you long to think of it? Now, in the time you've kept me here jawing, you've wasted at least three drops of my precious—I've got a good mind to make you pay for them in chips."

Five minutes afterwards he was about to re-enter the doorway, but paused and waited for the slow-stepping woman of whom he had just caught sight at the mouth of the alley.

"Here, mother, I'll give you a lift," he said, taking her by the arm.

"Thank you, dear. Have you been to Solomon's?" asked Mrs. Lipcott.

"I have; it's all right."

"I'm glad, because Mrs. Daniels had no change and . . ."

"I knew it," said Leuw, bitterly, "she never has. 'Pay you to-morrow,' she said, didn't she? I wonder how many more houses her husband's been buying this week."

"Don't be unkind, Leuw; it was only a little thoughtless of her."

"That's right, whitewash her. Jingo, I'd make her think if . . ."

But what particular reflections Leuw wished to instil into the said Mrs. Daniels, and under what conditions he could have done so, remained unuttered,

because at this moment Phil opened the door to light them up the few remaining stairs. Eagerly he pulled his mother into the room, which presently resounded with vigorous kissing.

"Here, stop that," came a peremptory command from Leuw.

"Don't you care, mother; he's only jealous," laughed Phil disrespectfully.

"Perhaps—perhaps not; but what I am certain about is that you are keeping mother standing quite a minute longer than she need; and in the second place, it's time you started learning to keep your feelings a bit dark, and not give yourself away before everybody. It isn't safe with such a lot of bad people waiting round to take a rise out of you."

Phil looked to see how his mother was taking Leuw's homily on the necessity of cultivating emotional discipline. He himself felt quite incapable of answering him. For the voices that talked to him in his day-dreams he always had a pat and accurate reply; but before the voice of the world, which now spoke to him in the words of his brother Leuw, he cowered tongue-tied and helpless. How good it must feel to be strong and of ready speech like his brother Leuw! He must watch and learn the secret of it from him.

Mrs. Lipcott, too, had been thinking how to answer her son. Not infrequently was she thus at a loss. But that never troubled her. However much this boy of hers seemed a stranger to her at times, however much in him she had to guess at, her heart told her that, from the little that was revealed, she could safely take the rest on trust. And so she contented her-

self with saying: "Come, children, supper's getting cold."

Through the business-like silence which followed ran three trains of thought, all on more or less diverging lines.

Mrs. Lipcott wondered how her life would have shaped but for the cold which grew angry at being neglected, and worked itself up into the rapid lung trouble that carried her husband off. Perhaps she might have owned by now as much jewelry as Mrs. Daniels; the little boot-factory had just begun to make headway. As it was, her concern was not with precious stones, but with soap and stove polish, and if these were of superior quality, and saved her a proportionate amount of bodily wear and tear, she considered it enough good fortune for one day. She had not remained very long in the stupor wherewith she had been smitten by the downfall of her prop and stay. The cries of two healthy young appetites for bread had acted as an efficient restorative. But the energy to which they had roused her she felt at best to be only artificial, and gave no guarantee of reserve force. Of late she had more than once cast involuntary questioning looks at her future as personified in her two sons—especially the elder; and each time she had felt reassured, nay, elated and triumphant. For the things that make us happiest are the anxieties which carry their own comfortings for cargo.

Leuw, for his part, ate his supper with teeth that mutinied. The truculent mood of before had come back to him. As it was, it served as the keynote of his heart—this protest against the bleak sordidness, the cheese-rind paring, the rag-and-patch routine he

had to call life. He knew it required a certain amount of courage to protest, and he was proportionately proud of it. All the other people in Narrow Alley were afraid to put their burdens on the broad back of the future. They groaned along beneath them in apparent content. True, they did their fair share of grumbling, but it was only in a sort of hole-and-corner way; that is, they complained about the slackness of trade, about the low rate of wages, and the high price of bread and coal. But they never went to headquarters. They never, so to speak, put their grievances down black on white, and dropped them into Fate's letter-box, where they would have a fair chance of receiving consideration. On the contrary, they seemed afraid of drawing the attention of Providence to their existence, for fear of reminding it that their power of endurance had not yet been strained to its uttermost. That was what the pious called a godly resignation. Leuw believed in the godliness but not in the resignation. He had been created, and therefore had a right to live; or at least, he should not have been born with the knowledge that there were better things on earth, if it was never intended that he should enjoy them. No knock-kneed compromise for him. He had begun early to shake his fist at Fate. It was just as well that they both should know exactly how accounts stood between them; and that was—everything or nothing.

And little Phil, meantime, vaguely foreboding the disadvantage at which the dreamer of dreams is placed in the midst of a wide-awake world, was busily rehearsing to himself the first maxim of self-defense, which, according to brother Leuw, consisted in not giving way to your feelings before people.

CHAPTER III

IN those days the London headquarters of Jewish charity, the so-called Board of Guardians, did not yet consist of the palatial premises in which its many-sided and far-reaching operations are being carried on now. A commodious, unofficial-looking house, in a square at the northwest point of the Jewish area, served for that purpose, till the growth of its scope threatened to make havoc of, and cast confusion into, its organization for want of more elbow room.

It does not take the Jew long to acclimatize himself, morally and physically, in the country of his adoption. If anything, he has a tendency, which would be amusing if it were not pathetic, to out-royal the king, that is, to accentuate his acquired characteristics more than is quite necessary. He is, perhaps, over-anxious to impress his fellow-citizen with the compliment he is paying him—the highest one man can pay another—in tarring himself with the same brush. But of his sincerity there can be no doubt; he does not stop at the external and superficial. In the countries where he is allowed to come in by the front door, and can fearlessly show himself at the windows, there is no heart more truly in accord than his with all the phases of the national destiny. He rejoices in his country's joys, he sorrows in her calamities, as though they were part and parcel of his individual self. For her sake he plucks from his heart his prejudices—a hard wrench where the roots go down century-deep. He

sacrifices for her both retrospect and prospect, his pride in a great past and his God-guaranteed hope of a specific redemption. But two things he keeps for his inalienable possession: the right to pray his prayers and the privilege of helping his poor.

The first of these reservations needs no explaining; the second is not so self-obvious. There is a narrow view which ascribes it to the desire of the community to avoid incurring unnecessary prejudices by throwing its destitute on the already heavily burdened shoulders of the British taxpayer. This is a gratuitous aspersion on the resources and generosity of a great people which is ever ready to accept the responsibilities which are, as it were, the penalty of its large-heartedness. The cynic and worldly-wise regard it as an ingenious device of purse-proud selfishness to pile up the largest possible total on the credit side in the ledgers of eternity. But sneer and pusillanimity are wrong, as usual. This clannish philanthropy is essentially a matter of sentiment, and sentiment is a property which must not be grudged to a race which has had its heart-strings so often played upon. Perhaps the forebear of this poor alien wretch spoke a word of comfort to your ancestor by the waters of Babylon; perhaps the one heartened the other for the roaring death in the arenas of Rome; or perhaps he writhed and died on the inquisitorial rack because he would not incriminate the Marrano from whom you trace your descent. All these things are more than possibilities, and one never finds it easier to pay a debt than when the heart is the only I. O. U. No set policy of temporal or spiritual import could avail as much as these vague promptings to settle accounts with an

obligation which, even if it ever had any warrant, distances of time and space ought to have rendered legendary. And though the watchword which speeds from mouth to mouth during the Passover ceremonial—"He who is hungry, let him come and eat"—must of necessity remain a formula of the lip, the sentiment of the Jew makes him practical enough to attempt the spirit where the effecting of the letter would be absurd.

Perhaps some thoughts like these were agitating the mind of the lady who, with her ten-year-old daughter, was entering the offices of the Board that Sunday afternoon; at any rate, she looked serious enough for it. Once inside, she stopped with an irresolution which showed her to be a stranger there. A deferential clerk stepped up and asked her business.

"I—I would like to see some one in authority," she said.

The clerk looked doubtful. "May I know your name, please?" he asked.

The lady opened her satchel and produced a card. The sight of the card-case, as well as of the crocodile leather purse, served to set the clerk's doubts at rest, and with a hurried: "Take a seat, please," he disappeared into one of the inner chambers. A minute or two afterwards he re-appeared with a benevolent-looking old gentleman.

"Good afternoon," said the old gentleman, smiling. "Your name is not entirely unknown to me, Mrs. Duveen. What can I do for you?"

"I should like to make myself useful in some way. . . ."

"Ah, as honorary visitor?" interrupted the old

gentleman. "I am delighted; we have plenty of room for additional workers."

"When can I start?" asked Mrs. Duveen.

"There is a slight formality of nomination and election to be gone through; but there will be no difficulty in that," replied the old gentleman. "Meantime you might perhaps accompany one of our paid investigators on his rounds to get some insight into the nature of your duties. Perhaps you would like to take advantage of your being on the spot and—that is, if your time permits."

"Oh, I have plenty of time," said Mrs. Duveen, and there was a suspicion of a sigh in her words.

"Is any one of the men in?" asked the old gentleman of the clerk.

It appeared there was; and presently Mrs. Duveen had been placed in charge of an escort to whom the old gentleman explained the circumstances of her call.

"I should have taken the pleasure of accompanying you myself, but I am the Chairman of to-day's rota, and there is a great deal of work waiting for me. By the way, is there any one particular kind of case you are more interested in than another?"

"Yes, in widows."

The old gentleman nodded intelligently with a sympathetic look at her weeds and crape.

"There is a widow's case first on my list," said the paid investigator; "a Mrs. Lipcott, of Narrow Alley, not very far from here."

Then the benevolent old gentleman shook hands with Mrs. Duveen, dutifully pinched the little girl's cheek, at which the latter showed considerable indignation, and a moment afterward the party of three had

sallied out upon their expedition, while the radiant August sun overhead shone his hardest to give the lie to any suggestion of care and poverty in a world he had tried for thousands and thousands of years to make an imitation heaven.

"I'm taking you the best way I can," said the paid investigator apologetically to Mrs. Duveen, who smiled her gratitude.

Sunday, as everyone knows, is market day down in Spitalfields; and though business is practically over by midday, the locality was littered with an aftermath of putrid oranges, sodden poultry-plumage, and other nondescript uglinesses. Once the little girl seized her mother by the hand, and pointing to the gutter, cried eagerly: "Look, mamma, there's a pussy asleep," and the paid investigator was not so cruel as to disillusion her.

"Yes, everything down here is bad," he said wearily, "bad for the sight, bad for the smell, bad for the heart."

Mrs. Duveen nodded a sorrowful assent. "I did not know how bad," she murmured.

"And perhaps there's worse in store," said the paid investigator, thinking of their errand.

Mrs. Duveen refrained from shivering out of deference to the sunshine; but she could not avert a sinking of her heart as they paused for a moment at the entrance to Narrow Alley. So far she had known of misery only by hearsay; now she was about to view it, eye to eye, touch it with her hand. She felt as a young medical may feel at his first autopsy.

"I hope that there will be room upstairs for the three of us," said the paid investigator, half to himself, as

they entered the narrow-necked passage. The ground-floor tenants opened their door, and watched them with inquisitive eyes; two half-grown girls surreptitiously sniffed the lavender emanating from Mrs. Duveen's unstoppered scent bottle—they did not get a treat like that every day.

The paid investigator, having enquired for Mrs. Lipcott's room, and having been assured of her presence at home, mounted the staircase, followed by Mrs. Duveen and the little girl. His knock, as he fully expected, was not answered immediately; he knew that poverty breeds suspicion. Then the door was opened by Leuw, who stared in large-eyed wonder at the callers. But the paid investigator unceremoniously brushed him aside, inviting his two companions to enter with him. Mrs. Lipcott hastily laid something aside and got up.

The paid investigator's first glance lighted on Phil, whose head peeped forth from under the blankets.

"Is the boy ill?" asked the paid investigator, producing pencil and note-book.

Mrs. Lipcott was still dumbfounded by the apparition of the strangers, and Leuw's tight-set lips showed the umbrage he had taken at the paid investigator's brusque handling of him; so it devolved upon Phil himself to answer the query.

"Please, sir, I ain't ill, but—mother's mending my trousers."

The paid investigator seemed to find neither pathos nor humor in the reply, for turning again to Mrs. Lipcott, he continued in business-like tone:

"How much do you earn a week?"

Mrs. Lipcott reflected a moment, and began her an-

swer; but she had only got as far as: "Well, it's all according, sir," when Leuw stepped forward, gently pushed his mother on one side and, lifting his scowling face to the paid investigator's, said:

"Look here, we've had enough of your cheek; who are you?"

It stands to reason that the paid investigator was taken aback; when he recovered himself, he gave a little laugh and replied good-humoredly:

"You're a bit forward for your age, little man; but your mother knows all about it."

"About what?" asked Mrs. Lipcott in amazement.

The paid investigator became impatient. "I really can't waste my time with you; I've got five other cases to do yet. Tell me distinctly what you want the Board to do for you."

"Do you come from the Board?" faltered Mrs. Lipcott.

"Yes, of course. Here's your application. You are Mrs. Lipcott, aren't you?"

"Yes, but . . ." Mrs. Lipcott looked round her helplessly; then she glanced at Leuw, and her eye lit up with intelligence.

"Why didn't you tell me you did it?" she said reproachfully. "If I thought you wanted me to ask the Board to help us . . ."

"I write to the Board to help us!" cried Leuw half inarticulate with conflicting emotions. "What do you take me for, mother?"

Then a sudden thought struck him:

"Did you do it, Phil?"

"I didn't, I swear I didn't," whimpered Phil, very much frightened.

"You see there's some mistake somewhere," said Leuw addressing himself to the gape-mouthed paid investigator. "We don't want any Board here; we're not beggars. Now, perhaps, you'll say 'Good afternoon' when you go; you didn't when you came in, you know."

Mrs. Duveen had been a silent and disconcerted witness of the strange proceedings. Her sight had, however, been busier than her hearing. From the moment of her entry, her eyes had been taking stock of Phil's wistful little face. At the first glance it had appealed to her with a vague sense of familiarity, of something remembered—a remembrance instinct with infinite heart-ache, and yet gladdening in having taken to itself a strangely palpable shape. It made her thoughts start off at a gallop. Little Dulcie was nestling against her mother, scared and trembling. What a terrible boy that was—what a temper he had! And yet she could almost hate herself for feeling afraid of him; she did not quite know what all the quarrel was about; and yet she was almost certain that the boy was in the right. If only someone would go and pat him on the head, he would quiet down at once; and—well, she would not mind doing it herself.

The paid investigator had, meantime, thought the matter over, and took it in its right light. He shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose, then, there is a mistake, and I've got nothing else to say. We had better go, Mrs. Duveen."

Mrs. Duveen pulled herself together, and stepped up to Mrs. Lipcott.

"I am very sorry if you have had any annoyance," she said very gently, "and I only want you to remember that I am quite innocent in the matter."

"Oh, there's no harm done, lady—no harm, thank you very much," said Mrs. Lipcott, still in great confusion.

"Good-by," said Dulcie, suddenly, coming close to Leuw, and tendering him her hand.

Leuw drew back for an instant as though the timid little hand were a great threatening fist. How—why was it that he had not become cognizant of her presence before? Why? Because he had been so busy playing the rough and the bully. It struck him suddenly that he could have effected his purpose as thoroughly without taking up such a bull-dog attitude; and he felt very much ashamed of himself. It was these great frank eyes before him that shamed him; if he could only pluck up heart to look full into them for but an instant—ah! there, he had done it, and simultaneously his hand responded to hers. Now he knew, by practical experience, how good it felt to have one's sins forgiven. He did not mind the tall lady in black bestowing such a fixed look on Phil at parting; he was not jealous; he had something better. For the dingy door-panel seemed illuminated by a smile long after the face to which it properly belonged had vanished.

The party of three reached the bottom without exchanging a word.

"I am afraid you have not made an agreeable start," said the paid investigator finally.

"I don't mind," said Mrs. Duveen absently; "but I can't help feeling terribly puzzled. Is it a hoax?"

"It is, and it isn't. The people want assistance badly enough, as you saw. They are simply too proud to take it. Probably some kind-hearted busybody of

their acquaintance sent in the application without their knowledge, thinking they would hardly have the courage to refuse the help which is being thrust upon them. I must say such obstinacy . . ."

"Obstinacy?" interrupted Mrs. Duveen.

"Well, call it strength of character," proceeded the paid investigator, somewhat shamefacedly; "still, whatever it is, it is not an everyday occurrence. Ah, so you won't come any further to-day?"

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Duveen, who had stopped. "Don't think I'm disheartened, but I must not tire my little girl too much. She insisted on coming with me and—well, I believe in the value of teaching children by object lessons."

An hour after Mrs. Duveen was back in her beautiful house up St. John's Wood. All through the train journey she had given such niggardly response to Dulcie's incessant questionings as to the moral and meaning of the afternoon that Dulcie was quite surprised when her mother put her a question in turn:

"Which of the two boys did you like best?"

"The one that shouted," replied Dulcie, without hesitation; "he looked so—so honest about the eyes. I noticed them particularly."

It was a curious question, thought Dulcie, but a more curious one followed: "Do you remember a boy that used to run about the house years ago?"

Dulcie puckered her brows in a desperate attempt at recollection, but at last she had to own up her failure.

"If you remembered him at all, you would have liked the other one better—the one in bed, you know," said Mrs. Duveen, with a tremble in her voice;

"and—and, Dulcie, as I looked at him and compared him with the boy that used to run about the house, I couldn't tell the difference."

Dulcie gazed at her awestruck. "Mamma, did I ever have a brother?"

Mrs. Duveen nodded; she could not trust her voice at all now.

"And what has that to do with the other boy?" continued Dulcie timidly.

"I don't know, dear, but I'm thinking." And Mrs. Duveen thought about the boy who so much resembled her dead son all that evening and half the next day; by that time she seemed to have arrived at some conclusion. For she locked the door of her room, and with trembling fingers she wrote a letter to Mrs. Lipcott.

CHAPTER IV

THE letter reached its destination by the last delivery that same evening. It was something like three years since Mrs. Lipcott had been the recipient of a communication by post, and the event naturally made a striking impression upon her; equally naturally she kept turning the letter over and over in her hands, considering who her correspondent might be.

"I know," said Phil suddenly, "it's from the 'black' lady that was here yesterday."

"And she's sent us some money," supplemented Leuw, already framing in his mind a suitable reply which was to accompany the return of the gift.

After this plausible conjecture, there was no longer any reason to delay arriving at certainty. Mrs. Lipcott looked at the neat, clear-cut handwriting, and felt equal to tackling it herself instead of handing it to Leuw.

"Dear Mrs. Lipcott," she began aloud, "the writer of this is the lady who called on you yesterday in company with the Board of Guardians official."

"See! I told you," cried Phil, triumphantly.

Leuw looked at him sharply, suspicious and annoyed at Phil's part of the conjecture having come true, whereas his own, referring to the enclosure of a dole, had gone wide of the fulfilment.

During the interruption Mrs. Lipcott had glanced at the succeeding lines; what she read made her turn

white, and the paper fluttered out of her hands. Silently Leuw picked it up, and held it out to her.

"No, read it yourself," she murmured; "read—it—to Phil."

"Board of Guardians official," resumed Leuw slowly, his voice threatening vengeance against the writer who had "given his mother such a turn." "My reason for writing to you is to put to you a proposal. Perhaps the only result will be to make you think me a foolish, self-loving woman; for—you see I am frank with you—my motive is rather one of selfishness than of kindness of heart. I want you to let me adopt your younger boy. He will replace for me a darling son whom I lost years ago, and of whom he is the living counterpart. I cannot guess whence I am taking the courage to address to you such a request; but I feel as though God himself had put it into my heart, and therefore I do not make myself any reproaches. I don't know what you are to gain in the matter. The only return I can offer you is the knowledge that your child by blood and mine by adoption will have his path in life made smooth for him. I am rich; I can offer him advantages which—pardon me—are apparently out of your reach. If he has any bent for studying, I can indulge it to the utmost of his wishes. The only sacrifice I shall ask of him is to take my name and to return me a hundredth part of the love which I am ready to bestow upon him. I do not want you to decide immediately. Ask God; and when He has answered you, let me know too. Yours in sisterhood, Rose Duveen."

More than once Leuw had tried hard to stop himself in the reading, but in vain; the fervid words

dragged him on till he had come to the end. When he finally paused, the silence hummed aloud with persistent echoes.

"What are we all afraid of? Why don't we talk?" asked Leuw at last.

"Because I am waiting for God to talk; till then I can say nothing," replied Mrs. Lipcott with quivering mouth and far-off eyes.

"Well, then, suppose meantime Phil puts in his spoke," suggested Leuw grimly.

"Oh, Leuw, don't ask me to say anything," came piteously from Phil. "What does it all mean? I don't want to guess—because I might guess right."

"What it means?" replied Leuw with an assumption of airiness. "Nothing very much. The lady wants you to live at her house, as soon as you like. Lucky you won't have to take long over your packing. By the way, there are those three collars we've got between us—who is to have the odd one?"

For answer Phil burst into tears. "Don't—don't speak to me so cruel, Leuw, dear," he sobbed. "It isn't my fault; I didn't ask her to come,—and—and if she wants to take me away from here, I'll run and tell the police."

Leuw's arm was round his neck in a moment. "No, young 'un, 'tain't your fault. I only wanted to know what you thought of it."

"Then, why did you go round the corner like to do it?" sobbed Phil, still disconsolate.

"It's all right, mother; don't worry," cried Leuw cheerily; "me and Phil have settled it."

Mrs. Lipcott was slowly recovering herself. Her mind had sunk prostrate beneath the weight of the

dilemma wherewith it had so suddenly become burdened; at last it stood upright again. Her first impulse was that of unreasoning anger against the woman who, seemingly without a qualm, claimed of her half her mother-heart, and compelled her to ponder, for the first time in her life, whether or not it was not the more precious half. What a wondrous thing wealth must be that it even made people bold to beg! But no; she would teach it a lesson, she would shame it into self-continnence, she would . . . and then? What good would come to her by indulging her malice? It would not kill in her the knowledge that she, even she, loved herself better than her child—that in the moment when her motherhood had been put to its only test, she had failed miserably. "Make his path smooth in life." Could she ever hope to do that? Could she expect to be a recompense to him for his bruising against the stumbling-blocks of a self-hewn future? Nay, she herself would become the obstacle that thwarted him from the start, and one does not love an obstacle any the better because its name is—Mother.

Thank God at least that the letter was not her secret. She would for certain have succumbed to the temptation of suppressing it; and surely the pain that may honestly seek the daylight is happiness to the remorse that burrows tunnels through the soul. She looked up and saw her boys' eyes fixed on her questioningly.

"What was it you asked me?" she said half at random.

"Asked you nothing," replied Leuw; "I was only saying that the 'black' woman's off."

Mrs. Lipcott shook her head. "Leuw, we must think it over."

Leuw's eyes opened wide in surprise. "Why, mother, what's there to think over? We're not going to give Phil away, are we?"

"Not give him away, but lend him away, Leuw; he'll always belong to us wherever he is. We'll do the lady a favor, that's all."

"Favor? Fine chance we've got of getting on if we go chucking favors at any promiscuous stranger that asks for 'em. Not if I know it," cried Leuw hotly.

Mrs. Lipcott swallowed something and proceeded:

"Don't be unjust, Leuw. The profit is not all on her side. Look what she's going to do for Phil."

"Yes, she's going to put her label on him—what is it? Duveen? Wish you good morning, Mr. Philip Duveen. There's a name to go to bed with!"

"She'll make a gentleman of him; she'll let him study," went on Mrs. Lipcott, half to herself.

"Let me study—will she?" broke in Phil eagerly.

"Ah, that's the bait that's going to hook you, I suppose," growled Leuw. "What was that you said just now about the police?"

"Leuw," said Mrs. Lipcott, making a great effort, "you must let me decide in this, it concerns me more than you."

"No, it doesn't," replied Leuw sullenly; "I'm fighting for my brother."

"And I am fighting for myself. I would have rather kept it in my heart, but you make me say it. I want Phil to go to the lady because otherwise I should feel afraid. If I said no, I might suffer for it afterward. Suppose—God forbid—things were to go badly with him when he grows up. Whom would he blame, me or you? If I knew I should be alive to hear his hard

words, I should not mind so much; but I might be dead, and have no chance of softening them with my tears. Can you understand now, Leuw?"

Leuw's eyes were on the ground, and his reply was very humble: "Yes, mother, I can."

"Then let us make up our minds to it cheerfully, as to a blessing of God which has come overnight. As long as Phil will not forget us. . . ."

She broke off, and half-stifled sobs finished the sentence.

Phil ran up, and crouched by her side: "I shan't go—I shan't," he cried.

"That's right, now that we've at last settled it nicely, you come and upset it all again," said Leuw with a gruffness that was artificial on the face of it. "Leave off worrying mother—she's crying for joy, that's what she is. You're going to be a swell, and wear a short jacket, like those ikey boys that come and sit on the platform on Distribution Day and . . ."

Here his voice snapped, and without making any further pretense at being a man, he crouched down on the other side of his mother and—but no, it must not be told. Even the man in the moon, who just then caught a glimpse of the group through the window, solemnly made up his mind not to say a word about it.

CHAPTER V

THE next day Phil nearly had a nasty accident in the way of black-marking his untarnished school record by inattention. To a question as to the name of the last Plantagenet he replied with a vague reference to the Grampian Hills, which showed that his mind was temporarily located in a different department of learning. His distraction, however, was very natural. Before him lay the most difficult task he had yet encountered—the reply letter to Mrs. Duveen. It had been resolved in family council to leave the writing of it entirely to him. And so he had been racking his brains all the day, realizing dimly and for the first time that life's problems are harder than those set by any other schoolmaster. It was not till he had got home again, and was sitting alone in the room, pen in hand, with the blank sheet of note-paper staring at him defiantly, that at last an inspiration came to him. What a fool he had been! This was not a case for brain-racking at all. All he had to do was to keep quite still and listen to the dictation of his heart: if the "black" woman wanted long words and finical phrases, she could look them up in the dictionary. He wasn't going to bother; and if it didn't please her, there were plenty of other boys. . . . And so, while the truculent fit was upon him, "Please, lady," he began, "mother don't mind for me to go and live with you, though she ain't very glad of it, as you would soon know for

yourself if you saw her red eyes. But she don't mind, because she says you'll do all right for me, and put me in the way of being a scholar, and what concerns the grub, I ain't so very keen on it, which I want you to take notice that I'm used to three meals a day, which are tea and bread for breakfast, bread and tea for the middle of the day, and a heavy feed of taters and fish for the evening—taters always and fish sometimes; not to forget meat on Sabbaths and the holidays. We've tried living on less, but it made us feel ill, and I once heard Leuw asking God why He didn't let him get born without a stomach at all, so I can't let you off anything, but if there's going to be any humbug about the scholaring, you'd better say so at once, and we'll part as good friends as if we had never known each other, and I'll want you to send me to a High School as high as what Mike Aarons went to when his father won all the money in the lottery, and they moved up Dalston way, which besides I'll want to see mother and Leuw very often, and if it's too far to walk, you'll have to stand the riding money; having filled up the four pages, this letter is from Philip Lipcott."

Carefully Phil read and re-read his epistle. It did not seem to him that it could be improved upon. He was especially gratified by its high-handed manner; it was just as well that the "black" woman should know whom she had to deal with. Of course, she had a very kind, soft face, but one could never tell by that. Mrs. Daniels looked very good-natured, but she always made his mother come two or three times for the money. He had a vague idea that perhaps it would be wise to consult a lawyer, or have something done

at Somerset House before he entered into any definite arrangement with the "black" woman. Nevertheless, the whole thing instilled into him a splendid feeling of initiative and independence. He wondered to how many boys of his age had ever been entrusted the responsibility of inditing and forwarding a letter "all on their own." Both his mother and Leuw had disclaimed any desire to know the more detailed form of his reply, as long as it kept to the general sense of an affirmative to Mrs. Duveen's proposal. If only he could have earned the penny for the stamp himself instead of having to ask his mother for it!

He enveloped and addressed the letter, and went down into the street to post it. At the pillar-box he waited, and looked round if perchance any acquaintance of his might pass by and watch him in his supreme moment. A man in a hurry nearly jerked the letter out of his hand, and then, with an apprehensive look at the muddy pavement, Phil quickly slipped it into the box. He heard it drop—"thud," he could almost have said—to the bottom, and the sound filled him with a sense of the irretrievable, which nearly frightened him. For the first time it came home to him, but only as in a dream, that he had done something terribly momentous; that he had taken his destiny in his hands, and had bent it out of its appointed shape. But people considerably over twelve have felt so, and have turned white at the feeling. He got out of reach of the pillar-box as fast as he could, but his apprehension seemed to keep pace with him. Never before had the world worn such an aspect of loneliness. He longed for his mother, for Leuw; his mother was out on an all-day job, and Leuw had for the past week

or so gone somewhere straight from school, and had not returned till supper-time. He volunteered no explanation of his mysterious absences, and it would have been absurd to question Leuw about anything he did or did not. Phil sauntered on aimlessly, and presently he came across Yellow Joe kicking his heels against the lamp-post, hands in pocket. Yellow Joe was not a nickname, but a faithful translation of the more official Joseph Saffron. Happily, he was one of the few select with whom Leuw allowed Phil to associate.

"Hullo, Joe," said Phil.

"That you, Phil? Why ain't you indoors reading?"

"Had to come out on business—been posting a letter."

In accordance with the ethics of politeness current in those parts, Yellow Joe, of course, immediately asked for the name of the addressee and a concise summary of its contents. But his inquisitiveness served to remind Phil that for the present it might be advisable to refrain from making the thing public property, especially as he had omitted to ascertain Leuw's view on the matter of publication. He parried Joe's enquiries as well as he could. Then he proceeded to the attack himself.

"Know any rich people, Joe?" he asked casually.

Joe ostentatiously dived deep into his pocket.

"How much do you want to borrow?"

Phil laughed. "No larks—real rich people; ever had anything to do with any?"

"Well," pondered Joe, "can't say I know 'em inside and out sort of, but when I was in the choir at

Baysland Street—you've never been in the choir, have you?"

"No, didn't have luck—neither me nor Leuw; never got word of anybody being wanted till it was too late."

"Well, once we had a Chanuka treat—bloke that used to come and interfere with the choirmaster at the rehearsals asked us up to his house."

"Yes, and what happened?"

"All right, don't gasp like that; I'll lend you some of my breath if you're short. Asked us up to the house, he did. Soon as we got inside there was a man at the door—sort of coachman, you know—what made us scrape our boots till we wondered that the mat didn't catch fire, and Jack Stump's came right off, because he was wearing his grandfather's; and a bit farther on stood the man what had asked us up, and we had to hold out our hands for him to look at, and those that he couldn't see his face in were sent off to a room with a big washing-tub running hot and cold—you bet I used hot—and then he marched us in, and his missis looked at us through goggles with a long handle to them, and then, of course, we had sweets and cakes—oh, did we? No, we didn't, because we first had to tootle up all the Service tunes—well, I suppose they called it supper, lot of little bits of nothing, and because we didn't know which way to eat 'em, we all said, 'No, thank you,' when the slavey brought 'em round, after which there was a magic lantern—was there? Lay you a house to a brick there wasn't. The man starts telling you a yarn about Judas Maccabeus, what a good boy he was, trying to make us feel ashamed of ourselves—once I gaped and he spots me, oh, my jaws; wonder I didn't dive my ivories back into the

gums the way I clicked 'em together again. If that man's alive now, it's only because we couldn't decide which was the hurtfullest way of killing him."

Now, Yellow Joe's powers of judgment were notoriously untrustworthy; when he did not understate a case, he overstated it—it was always a toss-up which. But the circumstantial evidence he adduced as to the nefariousness of this particular rich man left Phil no loophole for disbelief.

"Been to any others since?" he quavered.

"Catch me; 'once bitten, twice shy.'"

The pregnant terseness of the colloquialism amounted to a denunciation; but what was worse, Joe's inability to furnish other instances of wealth, which might go some way toward mitigating the unfavorable impression of the first, compelled Phil to magnify a specimen into a species—and a very bad species for anyone to have to do with it seemed. Perhaps if he had met Yellow Joe before posting the letter, which by now was, no doubt, already on its way to take the tidings of his recklessness. . . . Bah, surely his mother knew of these things as much as Yellow Joe; his mother loved him—she would not deliver him into the hands of enemies or disagreeable people, to say the least of it. Yellow Joe was no cheerful company; he would go away and leave him to the pangs of his prejudices and distorted observations. Still, though Yellow Joe's responses did not impress him materially, he determined to consult no other oracles for the time being. This involved his avoiding any stray associate whom he might meet, lest he should feel tempted to violate his resolution, and left him with a couple of hours of solitude to kill, which was to

him a new if not pleasurable experience. The cheapest way of doing it was by the expenditure of a little more sole-leather, although his foot-gear showed already large deficits on that point. He wondered if the supply of boots was included among the "black" woman's liabilities to him, which may be taken to show that his notions of his future relationship with her were as yet of the haziest. So he walked on, stepping as warily as possible to avoid unnecessary friction with the pavement. But even thus he soon got beyond his everyday radius, and presently reached the city, and was passing by one of the great Railway Centres where all London seemed to be taking train to undreamt-of destinations. "All London" included an old lady who waddled cumbrously up the stone steps while keeping a persistent eye on the green portmanteau that stumbled along her side fixed on a pair of human shoulders. At the second glance, however, Phil observed that it only obscured, and did not act as substitute for, the head which is the customary upshot of shoulders in general. A sound of hard-drawn breath, with a sob for tag, convinced him finally of the normal humanity of what he had for the moment supposed to be the greatest freak of the century—the trunk-headed boy. A sudden curiosity, which might have been the afterthroe of his initial astonishment, compelled him to follow the couple; he was eager to see if a strange presentiment, taking its cue from the familiar aspect of the carrier's clothing, would realize itself in his face. In the waiting-room the carrier was ordered to set down his burden. Phil looked—of course it was Leuw; there he stood, red and panting, whilst the old lady counted six half-pennies into his hand, which trembled as with palsy.

"Why didn't you say it was you? I'd have helped you up those steps with the thing," Phil accosted his brother a few seconds later.

"You here?" said Leuw unemotionally. "Been spying, eh?"

"May I drop dead if . . ."

Leuw nodded to imply that as far as he was concerned the incident was closed. Phil walked on beside him, wrestling both with his thoughts and words.

"You might have hurt yourself," he broke out at last.

"I chanced that; besides they ain't always so heavy."

"Is that what you've been doing every evening?"

"Whenever I did anything. Jobs are scarce, you know, and plenty to do 'em."

"If mother was to know!"

"Look here, young Phil," said Leuw, turning on him with leisurely deliberation, "mother won't know, —understand?"

"I'll feel all the time like thinking a lie."

"Never mind what you feel. If I don't say anything about feeling,"—here Leuw rubbed his shoulders ruefully—"I don't see where you come in."

"Then what do you do it for?" asked Phil tearfully.

"Because I've suddenly got gone on toffee-apples—can't live without 'em. What, you don't believe? Well, mind you don't cut yourself—you're sharper than you think. 'Tain't toffee-apples—it's—it's—rolling up shirt sleeves, remember? I've got to get ready, and only four more days to do it in."

"Get ready? And what's this you're doing now?"

"Sort of preliminary; when a man wants to set up in business, what's he got to have?"

"I don't know, Leuw—I never thought of it."

"Good thing then I didn't wait for you to tell me; rhino he's got to have. That's what I've done the carrying for. Don't fret—I'm not going to stick to it; it don't make you feel proud of yourself. But I can't really call myself a man till I've left school for good and all, and a kid can do a lot of things that a man can't, eh, Phil?"

"But—but mother thinks you're going to Spiegler's . . ."

"As shop-boy? Shilling a week, and find your own aprons? Not yet. I'm going to have a firm of my own first—'Lewis Lipcott and no Co.' Very sorry for Spiegler, I am sure, but if I go broke, I'll see what I can do for him then. Come on home; that green old leather box has done me for to-day," he concluded, working his left arm somewhat limply. And by the time they got back to Narrow Alley, Phil flattered himself that he had attained to a faint glimmer of his brother's capacity for enterprise.

Although Phil's separation from his mother and Leuw was by now an accepted fact, a tremor of consternation ran through the Lipcott household when Mrs. Duveen's letter, in answer to Phil's, came, and made final arrangements for his transfer. The heart-felt, re-assuring phrases lost color alongside of the statement that she would call to fetch him next Friday afternoon; the gentle suggestion read like an arbitrary decree, a menace. It said, if not in so many words: two days longer you shall be complete, and then I shall come and help myself to my share of you.

And yet the pain of it proved outwardly a blessing: by settling deeper in their hearts it could not look out through their eyes; and each one, seeing the others seemingly resigned, grew afraid of hinting at his own discontent,

CHAPTER VI

ALL next Friday morning Mrs. Duveen was troubled by a question which, on the face of it, was hardly justified in causing her a moment's indecision: Was she to drive down to Narrow Alley in the carriage or not? And, indeed, it was only by a small margin that it was decided in the affirmative. With the instinct of a good woman she shrank from flaunting unnecessarily the paraphernalia of wealth before eyes which had, no doubt, many a time and oft looked hungrily into baker-shops—the eyes of Narrow Alley. But then this carriage of hers had been the last present her husband had given her; in using it upon the errand before her, it seemed somehow as though he were sharing with her its responsibility and giving it his sanction. For though her resolve had not known an instant's weakness from the hour of its birth, she liked to think that she was doing his pleasure as well as her own, by making the gift act as a substitute for the giver. He would then explain to her dead boy—of course, she never imagined them otherwise than as being in close companionship—that he had no cause for jealousy, that he was not being ousted from his mother's heart, but that his mother was giving him the supremest proof of her loyalty by setting up a living monument of him in her home.

Furthermore—here her tears changed to a smile—she hoped the sight of her equipage would give little Phil abundant guarantee that he was certain of his three meals a day.

Then she suddenly pulled herself up short. "I am getting old and fanciful," she said to herself. But she was wrong; she was not getting old—at least not at a faster rate than any woman of thirty-five has a right to; nor was it fancifulness on her part. She was only a little excited, as was natural under the circumstances. Dulcie, of course, had asked to be allowed to accompany her, and Mrs. Duveen had readily acquiesced. Listening to Dulcie's prattle would be the surest way of preventing her own play of thoughts from becoming a disorganized romp.

Dulcie came up to expectation in so far that, when the carriage got into the mazy mysteries of the Spital-fields district, Mrs. Duveen was collected enough to instruct the bewildered coachman in the way he should go. Although the streets were tolerably clear of traffic, a step-by-step mode of advance was necessary, owing to the teeming multitudes of children, some of whom had a dangerous habit of cropping up within six inches of the horse's fore feet. As they neared the mouth of Narrow Alley, Dulcie suddenly shot out her arm and pointed:

"Look, mamma, there he is."

"Who is?"

"The boy who shouted. He was peeping round the corner, and when he saw us, he ran away."

Mrs. Duveen was not displeased that her coming had been observed and heralded. It would afford the poor thin-faced woman upstairs a moment or two in which to pass through the acuteness of the final wrench, and wrenches are best dealt with when no unnecessary looker-on is about. Nor did Mrs. Duveen find herself disappointed in her theory. When

she and Dulcie entered the little room, Mrs. Lipcott received them with a smile, which almost succeeded in concealing the effort it cost.

"I don't know how to thank you," she began, gripping Mrs. Duveen's extended hand.

"Well, and what am I to say?" replied Mrs. Duveen, returning the other's grip almost convulsively.

"Then please don't let us say anything about it at all; I dare say we have both thought more about it than we could ever put into words."

Mrs. Duveen looked at her with a glance wherein pity struggled with admiration; then she said:

"How wonderfully brave you are!"

"I, brave? It's you who are brave."

"You mock me, Mrs. Lipcott; I am weak and selfish."

But Mrs. Lipcott shook her head persistingly as she went on, still with that tense smile of hers:

"Why, look at the great risk you are taking on yourself. What do you know about my child? How can you be sure that he isn't everything that is bad and abominable? You couldn't even tell whether he had straight limbs or not. My very readiness to part with him ought to have been a warning to you."

"Well?" asked Mrs. Duveen expectantly.

"All that never struck you—or if it did, you never considered it. You didn't try to safeguard yourself against making a bad bargain, as other people would have done under the circumstances. You didn't 'make enquiries;' you didn't come and size him up inside and outside like a calf at a fair. You just did as your heart told you to do; didn't you want a lot of courage for that?"

This time it was surprise that kept Mrs. Duveen silent. How was she to know that the only compensation on earth which the poor possess is the power of ready expression? Life gives them words, because it is afraid that their dumb thoughts would kill them.

"I am very glad you said that, Mrs. Lipcott," replied Mrs. Duveen finally. "Till this moment I did not think there was anything in this affair that might stand to my credit. You don't know what a deed of charity you have done in making me think less meanly of myself."

Mrs. Lipcott's lips moved as though she were about to speak; then they shut tightly, and her gaze wandered from Mrs. Duveen's face to Phil in silent entreaty. Mrs. Duveen understood.

"If Phil is ready"—she said, her voice very soft and kindly.

"Yes, he's quite ready."

It was Leuw who answered. Even had he known how ill-tempered his words sounded, he would not have cared. It was really very annoying. Ever since she had come into the room he had felt the little girl looking at him, and the annoying part of it was that while she did that, he could not look at her, much as he wanted to. Once or twice their glances had crossed, and he had colored up and looked away in a hurry. Why should he? Especially when she herself not so much as drooped an eyelash, but continued her equanimous stare in utter contentment. For all she seemed to care he might be a wax figure or something painted on a wall. His manly soul revolted against this implied inferiority; and that, combined with a nameless ache into which his brother Phil had re-

solved himself, had put the cloud on his face and the rasp into his voice. He, too, wished that the whole thing were over and done with. It was hard work keeping down the gulps; besides, it might be dangerous; at least, it hurt enough.

Well, it could not last much longer now; already things were taking place between his mother and Phil. The lady in "black" was looking out through the window. The sight gratified Leuw curiously; her window was probably ordinary glass, and had no cardboard patched across to make it picturesque. And then he started violently; the little girl was talking to him.

"I hope you aren't cross because we are taking your brother away with us?"

There—nearly; that gulp had almost gone too high—he only managed to swallow it by the veriest nick of chance.

"Oh, it's all right; don't trouble about that," he answered vaguely.

"We'll be very kind to him."

"You'd better."

And then he ought to have felt glad, because his brusqueness visibly disconcerted the self-possessed little girl, and made her at a loss what to say next. But before he could put his emotions into the right shape, Phil was upon him with streaming eyes and sobbing: "by, Leuw."

Here was another dilemma: ought he to kiss Phil? But Phil solved the difficulty by throwing his arms about his neck and—well, and then there was no help for it.

"Here, leave off blubbering—what'll the people downstairs think?" Leuw whispered severely.

"I can't help it," replied Phil, and then his tears ceased immediately. As he was going away, it did not so much matter to him what the people downstairs thought; but the disgrace of it was a bad legacy to leave Leuw, and Leuw didn't deserve it.

Mrs. Lipcott went to the door. Mrs. Duveen, however, stood irresolute and embarrassed. She did not know how to express in words what she wanted to say. But Mrs. Lipcott guessed, and saved her further trouble.

"No, not a penny, Mrs. Duveen. I don't want it to appear that I had sold my child. You wouldn't like it either—would you?"

"Not in the way you put it," faltered Mrs. Duveen; "but I should so much like to do something to make your life easier. Perhaps your other boy—perhaps I might find you a situation in the office of one of my friends."

"Much obliged, lady," replied Leuw, to whom she had turned at the last words, "but I have already made up my mind what to take to."

Mrs. Duveen shrugged her shoulders in token of despair.

"It almost looks as if you had both determined to punish me," she said, smiling tremulously. And then she became quite serious.

"But you will promise me, Mrs. Lipcott, that if ever you cannot help yourself, you will look on me as a sister."

Mrs. Lipcott gave the promise; it did not commit her to anything. And then, without any visible concerting, a move was made downstairs. Phil headed it. He knew by so doing he laid himself open to the

suspicion that he was in a great hurry to shake the dust of Narrow Alley off his feet; but he preferred being misinterpreted to the possibility of being unnecessarily looked at by his mother and Leuw. A cursory glance into the copper kettle, which Mrs. Lipcott's polishing had converted into the family mirror, had shown him that his face had resumed an aspect of tolerable composure. And by taking the lead he ran less risk of breaking down again and so becoming a delectation to the "people downstairs" and a humiliation to Leuw. Next came his mother and Mrs. Duveen, the latter giving the former some details as to her probable movements in the near future, which would perhaps include a visit to the seaside, for the benefit of Phil. The rear was brought up by Dulcie and Leuw. She had waited at the top of the staircase till Leuw had finished fastening the door, and then without further ceremony had thrust her hand in his. The descent looked dangerous.

But Leuw did not appreciate her trust; he promptly withdrew his hand.

"Why?" asked Dulcie, looking up at him in pained wonder.

"Dirty fingers—spoil your mittens," he explained speciously.

"They ain't mittens—they're gloves," was the indignant retort.

Her foot emphasized her indignation by making a false step. After that there was no help for it. Leuw had to accept the pilotship.

"But only to the bottom," he threatened. He knew what awaited him then—gaping curiosity; and though the feel of the warm little hand was the most

pleasurable sensation life had yet given him, it was outweighed by fear of the ridicule he was surely storing up for himself. But Dulcie had no idea of the momentous reasons which had prompted his proviso, and straightway informed him he was horrid.

"Don't care if I am," replied Leuw.

"It's wicked not to care whether you are horrid or not," declared Dulcie.

"Dare say you've been told so yourself."

"I haven't."

"Then you ought to be."

Leuw held tight to the banisters in case he needed support against the fierce retort which no doubt was gathering during her momentary silence. He also turned his head towards her so as not to be taken by it unawares. Then he gasped. Instead of an angry frown a smile, sweet and wistful, confronted him.

"Don't let's quarrel, eh?" she said.

"All right," assented Leuw promptly, only to regret his promptness the next instant. Perhaps he had been tricked; perhaps that smile of hers was only some insidious method of attack. But because, such as it was, it did so much to lessen the pain of parting with his brother, he would look at it in all charity, and give it credit for the best intentions.

They completed the descent in silence, because they both felt that was the best way of keeping their compact. By the time they reached the court, the other three had nearly got as far as the carriage. Phil was looking at it scared. How shiny it looked; he wondered what kind of polish they used for the horse. He gave a start when Mrs. Duveen opened the door, and told somebody to get in; quite true, she meant

himself. Dare he kiss his mother once more? He would chance it, come what may. And nothing came—at least, no tears. After that he could safely give Leuw's hand another shake.

But Leuw did not let him off so cheaply; bending close to him he whispered in Phil's ear:

"Phil, do you remember the other time you rode in a carriage?"

Phil looked at him nonplussed; then he recollected.

"Yes, at father's funeral."

"And you'll never forget?"

"Never."

Leuw nodded; he was satisfied. He knew Phil had caught the inner meaning of his query. It had always been the most poignant recollection of their boyhood, that drive to the cemetery in the lumbering mourning coach in which they had sat, their arms twining about each other, their hearts closely knit by the chain of their common sorrow. The dreary scene had brought home to them how near they were to one another; it rose up in their minds whenever there was danger of a harsh thought or bitter word. But this was the first time that either had given it speech. They had arrived at the parting of their ways, and neither knew where or how their paths would cross again; each one was about to start on the forging of his life, but however it shaped, they wanted to make sure that at least one memory would be part of both and make them eternally kin. And so this was their way of swearing everlasting brotherhood.

"Never," repeated Phil, and before the word had ceased to vibrate on Leuw's hearing, the carriage was rumbling away. He did not know whether he had

answered Mrs. Duveen's kindly "good-by;" he believed he had distorted his features into a grin so as not entirely to ignore Dulcie's parting smile. But he knew nothing for certain till his mother tapped him on the arm and said:

"Let's come in, Leuw; what's the use of standing here?"

He then became aware of the surging crowd and the oppressive curiosity of the neighbors, who were overwhelming his mother with enquiries, to which she gave perfunctory replies.

Of course he would go in, and every unwarranted visitor would be shown the door. What a lot of good a little solitude would do him. He would get rid of the heavy weight of thought that was crushing his mind, and what concerned the aching smart that seemed to set his eyes on fire—perhaps he would even find a cure for that.

Tenderly he took his mother by the arm, and, looking neither right nor left, clove a way for the two of them. But his ardent desire to be left alone was not to be gratified. Scarcely had they got back to the room, and had given one look round for a familiar figure, which they knew would not be there, when the agonized creak of the staircase and the noisy swishing of frocks announced somebody's coming. Both held their breath as though that would insure the comer's passing on, but the next moment dashed their hopes, and ushered in Mrs. Diamond, red and breathless.

"Why, what's the matter—what's it all about?" she gasped.

Mrs. Lipcott looked at her with a glance which

somewhat disconcerted the visitor, for the tone of her next words was half apologetic:

"I couldn't make out what they were telling me downstairs. I just saw it drive away from a distance—the carriage, you know, and they said your little Phil was going away in it."

"Yes, Phil went away 'in it," corroborated Mrs. Lipcott.

"Why, who's taking him out for a drive?"

"He isn't gone for a drive. He has left us; somebody has adopted him."

"Adopted? Who is it—why don't you tell me?"

"A Mrs. Duveen," said Mrs. Lipcott wearily.

"You don't mean to say the rich Mrs. Duveen?"

"She seemed very well-to-do."

Mrs. Diamond clasped her hands together. "And to think that if I had been here ten minutes ago, I should have been able to talk to her! I've been wanting to know her for years; she'd be such a nice woman to go to have tea with. But do go on; tell me how it all happened."

Briefly Mrs. Lipcott gave an account of Mrs. Duveen's first call in the company of the paid investigator from the Board of Guardians, and what occurred subsequently. As the story proceeded, Mrs. Diamond's eyes glistened, and a fatuous look of satisfaction spread over her broad face.

"So that letter to the Board did it all?" she asked finally.

"I suppose so," was Mrs. Lipcott's quiet reply.

"Well, I wrote that letter," burst from Mrs. Diamond triumphantly.

"You did?" cried Leuw and Mrs. Lipcott in a breath.

"Yes, I did," replied Mrs. Diamond, thrusting out both her arms as if to ward off the storm of gratitude which she was sure would overwhelm her presently; "it was my idea entirely. I was your good angel as usual. Oh! when will the community recognize all the good work I am doing?"

"If it was you that sent the Board people here," began Mrs. Lipcott. . . .

"Yes?" interrupted Mrs. Diamond eagerly. Her reward was coming now.

"—then I don't thank you for it."

"Great heavens, the woman is mad," cried Mrs. Diamond, turning to an imaginary audience to testify; and then, as she saw Mrs. Lipcott was about to proceed, she waved her down fiercely:

"Don't thank me for it? Of course not. When can one ever do enough for the likes of you? You ain't satisfied that one of your—your children has been taken off your hands, and will be brought up like a prince? A fat lot you've done to deserve it. Only because my good heart wouldn't keep still, and made me think and worry about you, I've now got to run the risk of going into a fit and making poor old Diamond a widower before his time. Don't thank me? You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Leuw was standing rampant, his fists clenched at the biting words. Then he did the proper thing—he went and sat down quietly in the farthest corner; his mother would tackle her better. He was right; his mother set about her vindication, not as he would have done, with a torrent of angry recriminations, but very softly and leisurely. There was no hurry; it would take Mrs. Diamond at least two minutes to reconstruct herself after her collapse.

"It wouldn't be honest of me to pretend I was grateful to you for it, Mrs. Diamond," said Mrs. Lipcott. "I know you meant the writing of that letter for all that was good and kind, but if it hadn't been written at all, my Phil would have been here now."

Mrs. Diamond worked herself up as far as a grunt.

"Of course, I knew what it meant for him when the lady came and offered to take him to her; I dared not say 'no,' for his sake. But if the offer had never been made, how much heart-ache would I have been spared. And then, who knows it is for the best? Perhaps he would have done as well if he had been left to climb his stiles himself. You know, Mrs. Diamond, the blessing of God will any day go as far as the help of man. And, in any case, we should still have been all together; that is the only thing I think of at present."

"Well, I'm glad there's a chance of your coming to your senses *some* day," said Mrs. Diamond with overt sarcasm, as she gathered herself up to go. "All I know is that I'm done with you."

"God will help me," said Mrs. Lipcott. However, it was with a sinking heart that she heard the door slam. Her pious utterance was no mere commonplace, but Mrs. Diamond was half her living. And presently her trust in God was brilliantly justified, because the next moment Mrs. Diamond re-appeared in the doorway—quite a different Mrs. Diamond to the one of the red face and screech voice. This one said quite sweetly:

"By the way, Mrs. Lipcott, I've got some easy washing for you next Monday. A happy Sabbath to you."

"A happy Sabbath, ah! yes, a happy Sabbath!" murmured Mrs. Lipcott bitterly to herself.

CHAPTER VII

PHIL LIPCOTT knew that, however eventful his future life might be, it would contain no more definite landmark than the Friday on which he severed his connection with Narrow Alley. The intense excitement of the day, far from throwing his feelings into chaos, only tended to heighten his powers of perception. Every heave of the carriage ran through him with the force of an electric shock. The sweet, gentle look of the "black" lady opposite him became a stare beneath which he writhed; and when Dulcie first broke the silence, once they had got under way, with the remark that "by rights he ought to sit with his back to the driver," even Mrs. Duveen's smiling reply "that it didn't matter this time," could not redeem Dulcie's words from being a vote of censure.

"Don't look so sad," went on Mrs. Duveen playfully.

"Don't you think I ought to?" came Phil's quick reply.

That very moment he had succeeded in putting the right construction on the vague dissatisfaction which had possessed him all through; he felt like being kidnapped, and he wanted the "black" lady to know it.

Dulcie regarded him thoughtfully; then she delivered herself:

"I like you for saying that."

"Why?" asked Phil pointblank.

"I don't know," admitted Dulcie, without appear-

ing in the least abashed. Of course she didn't know; it would take her quite another six or seven years to find out truly the causes of things. But by that time she would know that what she liked in Phil, on this particular occasion, was his manner of answering—a manner which reminded her strongly of that of his brother, "the boy who shouted."

Mrs. Duveen, too, was not displeased at Phil's brusqueness. She understood the boy's irritation, and was, if anything, agreeably surprised to see it manifest itself; it showed he had the courage of his opinions. But at the same time she knew how far she herself was responsible for it, and so it was more in answer to herself that she said:

"At any rate, we shall try to make you very happy with us."

"Will you?" asked Phil with much wistfulness, and yet as much suspicion in his voice.

"Certainly; but you must help us a little." Phil sat up. What was coming? No doubt some onerous condition by which the "black" lady was going to give her game away. He tried to imagine how Leuw would have tackled this dangerous situation.

"Help you? Well, I'm not going to do anything hard," he said stubbornly.

"It isn't very hard. I only want you to trust me, that's all. Do you think your mother would have let you go with us if there were anything to be afraid of? Now, there's a good boy, trust me a little bit."

"I'm sure I wouldn't beg him so hard," cried Dulcie indignantly, "everybody trusts you—the butcher and the dressmaker and everybody; and Jane told the policeman yesterday she'd never had such a good

place in her life, and don't you think I was listening, because I never, *never* listen."

Mrs. Duveen put a gentle hand over the voluble little mouth.

"No, let Phil himself answer," she said patiently.

"About the trusting?" asked Phil, perhaps to gain time. Mrs. Duveen nodded.

"Well, I'll chance it; I can't say any fairer, can I?"

Mrs. Duveen laughed, but so as to make it obvious that her motive was pleasure and not amusement. She knew one is on the safe side in looking on children as sensitive plants.

"Aren't we near Edgware Road," asked Dulcie suddenly. "You know you said to Uncle Bram that. . ."

"Yes, yes—we shall be there presently," broke in Mrs. Duveen hastily. Phil pricked up his ears. Edgware Road? What was going to happen there? That wasn't the address to which he had sent his letter. Well, he had promised to trust them, and it would not be honest to break his word, even though nobody but himself knew anything about it. So, in order to save himself from further temptation in the matter, he determined to set his mind to the enjoyment of the drive. And in this he succeeded so well that the sudden stopping of the carriage woke him from a halcyon state that had almost made him torpid.

"Is this where you live?" he asked distractedly.

"Live!" exclaimed Dulcie with scorn. "Don't you see this is a tailor's shop?"

But their halting place was a good deal more than a tailor's shop; it was a large clothing emporium to which even the great Edgware Road could point with pride as a local achievement.

Mechanically Phil followed the other two in.

"A complete outfit for the young gentleman? Certainly, ma'am. Please step this way," said the obsequious shop-walker.

"Young gentleman! Who are you having a lark with?" was on the tip of Phil's tongue; but even his keenest scrutiny could detect no irony in the man's mien or manner. And presently he was being measured as carefully as if he were the first boy of his size who had ever wanted clothes.

"And you might let him put on the Eton things at once," said Mrs. Duveen to the shop-man at the end of a colloquy, from which Phil learnt, to his utter astonishment, that he was to be furnished with three suits, each for different wear.

Good gracious! he would have to spend all his time changing from one into the other.

"Certainly, ma'am; but we had better get the other things first," replied the shop-man.

Other things? What, were they going to buy the whole place up? At any rate, it was sampled pretty completely. Boots, three pairs, good strong lace-boots, patents, and slippers. Then hosiery, ever so many collars, ties, underwear, handkerchiefs. From the hat department came two caps, a "bowler" and—no, this was too much! What would Yellow Joe, what would all Narrow Alley say to Phil Lipcott in a chimney-pot hat? But, protest as much as he would, the inexorable shop-man dragged him before the man-high looking-glass to make him concede that it was a perfect fit. After that he was hurried off to a different room, where the same shop-man acted as his valet, and helped him into the "Eton things." Then there was more looking-glass. Phil almost

jumped with fright as he glanced at himself. So Leuw's prophecy about his developing into one of those short-coated, broad-collared swells had come absolutely true. When he returned, he was just in time to see Mrs. Duveen counting out nine shining sovereigns; and she only got three shillings change. Phil became suddenly convinced that the "black" lady was very much in earnest, because nine sovereigns, even minus the three shillings, was evidently too much to pay for a joke. All the way back to the carriage he pondered how to take the occasion. He wondered if he ought to make a speech; he would try. And then, almost in spite of himself, he touched the "black" lady's gloved hand with his—they were once more seated in the carriage—and said:

"Thank you, ma'am."

How grateful he was to the shop-man for teaching him that "ma'am."

Mrs. Duveen kept his hand in hers, and next did a quite unexpected thing; she bent forward, and before Phil could guess her intent, she had kissed him on the cheek. The following instant he was startled by a cry from Dulcie.

"Me, too, mamma!"

And without giving her mother time to do her bidding, Dulcie had flung her arms about Mrs. Duveen's neck, and was kissing her with half-frenzied passion. Mrs. Duveen patted her soothingly. But she was deeply grateful for the danger-light. What she held in her arms was not a child, but a little powder mine of love, into which she would have to be very careful not to drop the spark of jealousy, or God knew what the result would be.

"But you must not call me 'ma'am,'" she said turning smilingly to Phil, who was watching the incident with wide open eyes and mouth.

"And he isn't going to call you mamma; you're my mamma and nobody else's," ruled Dulcie, the melting grayness of whose eyes had hardened into a steel-blue glint.

Mrs. Duveen had an inspiration.

"Then perhaps you might suggest what he's to call me," she said deferentially.

The appeal to her authority had its effect on Dulcie. She looked at Phil, and her anger against him melted into pity.

Poor boy, he did not appear to be overburdened with the joys of life, and she was deliberately going to deprive him of a great chance of adding to them. But be that as it may, she was clear on one point: her mamma must be entirely her own, name and all.

"You may call her 'auntie' if you like; that's a sort of second-hand mother, you know," she said finally, and with an appearance of great generosity.

"That's splendid, Dulcie," said Mrs. Duveen joyfully; now that the question of style and title had been raised, she saw it was really one of great concern. "You won't mind 'auntie,' Phil, will you?"

"I'd rather make it 'aunt,'" replied Phil; "'auntie' sounds so—so babyish."

"Please yourself, by all means," laughed Mrs. Duveen in reply.

So a crisis was happily averted. Dulcie resumed her look of angelic imperturbability and her seat in the corner. But Phil could not help eyeing her from time to time with sidelong glances. It struck him that he

had taken her too much for granted. She was evidently a more complicated affair than that unruffled little face of hers led one to believe. But the thought did not trouble him long. He had more important business in hand; he fancied he was beginning to like this so-called aunt of his, and he wanted to make his fancy an accomplished fact before something came and interfered. And as nothing interfered, he made some headway with his task by the time the carriage came to a final pause.

"This is our house," pointed Dulcie with an emphasis on the "this" which was clearly intended to reprove him for the tailor-shop. Phil looked at the fine four-storied building. He did not at all like Dulcie's boastfulness. "Our house," indeed! He wondered how many rooms in it his new aunt occupied, and how many other tenants it contained. But he was not allowed to wonder long. Simultaneously both the front door and the area door opened, and out came two white-capped young women.

They helped the occupants of the carriage to alight, and then, at a word from Mrs. Duveen, they burdened themselves with the packages containing Phil's outfit. Phil caught them looking at him furtively, but he had no reason to feel annoyed at their curiosity, because it was visibly tempered with respect. He was, however, a little disconcerted that such well-dressed ladies should be made to carry parcels while he stood idle.

"Shall I help them?" he asked Mrs. Duveen in a half whisper.

"No, thank you, sir, we shall manage all right," came from one of the young women, who had apparently overheard him. This time Phil could hardly

restrain himself from laughing aloud. The stupid thing! If she only knew whom she was "sirring." Why, he was Philly Lipcott, who lived in Narrow Alley, and whose mother went out washing.

"Come in, dear," said Mrs. Duveen, touching him on the shoulder.

"You ain't paid the carriage man yet," Phil reminded her.

"We never pay John; he belongs to us, horse and all," he was informed by Dulcie. Phil was fairly staggered. He looked at Mrs. Duveen, but Mrs. Duveen only smiled at him. So it was true; his new aunt did not seem the sort of woman to smile when she heard her daughter telling an untruth. It appeared, then, that he had got into the hands of people who could ride in a carriage all day if they liked. Perhaps he had not made such a bad bargain after all.

A sudden suspicion struck him. He stopped Dulcie as she was about to set foot on the stone steps leading to the house, and pointing to the two parcel-carriers who were just disappearing in the area door-way, he whispered hurriedly:

"Who are those ladies?"

Dulcie respected his confidential tone, because she whispered back:

"They aren't ladies; the tall one is Betsy and the short one is Jane, and there's Mrs. Isaacs in the kitchen doing the cooking."

"And they all belong to you?"

"Not to me, but to mamma; and to me, too, a little bit."

"Here, just a minute—do you keep lodgers?"

"Lodgers? What's that?"

Mrs. Duveen had preceded them into the hall, and was watching the two eager little faces with a smile of silent content; then she called:

"Come in, dearies; you can talk better inside."

Dulcie scrambled up, and Phil followed more leisurely. At last he was about to enter the house of mystery, and he might as well take his time about it. When he reached the top step, he felt a thrill—a thrill of joyful surprise. There, against the right of the door-frame, he saw the tin capsule containing the three-lettered name of God, which according to the Mosaic code should figure on the door-post of every Jewish home. He had known, of course, all along that Mrs. Duveen was of the same faith as he. But the sight of the "Mezuzah," was to him a guarantee of kinship which all her kindness had failed to put into his heart. However much they had been strangers, however much divided by wealth and social standing, here was the common bond which neither of them denied. For the first time in his life Phil caught the meaning of the great ordinance: God's people were to testify to him thus publicly, in order that by their testimony they should make known to one another their everlasting brotherhood.

And Phil entered the house of mystery, but his fear did not cross the threshold with him.

CHAPTER VIII

FIVE minutes later Phil was in his room, watching Jane open the parcels and bestow them in wardrobe and cupboard.

"You'd better be washing, sir—they're waiting tea for you," she said after a while.

"Oh, yes—of course," stammered Phil meaninglessly. He took off his coat, and went to the wash-stand. In the bowl lay a cake of soap smelling like spice and looking like a piece of sculpture. What a pity it was to spoil it by putting it into the water. He thought of the toilet arrangements at home—the pump down in the open court, with the shouting, scrambling crowd of boys and girls, each struggling to get his or her turn before the other, and the sarcastic cries of:

"That's enough—you ain't bought the pump, have you?" or "You've only got one face, don't rub it off." And in the summer, when the water famine was on, you had to run about the neighborhood, and beg for a canful from people who could afford to have a tap in their kitchen; and you didn't always get it, because they were short themselves. This was very much better. And Phil washed and washed, feeling that he had to scour himself of the accumulated dirt of ages; or, as Jane put it, in reporting on the matter to her mistress afterwards—

"Lawks, ma'am, he just went for that soap and water like as he wasn't going to have another sluish so long as he lived."

He had just finished touching up his hair when Mrs. Duveen entered to fetch him.

"In case you didn't find your way," she explained.

As Phil followed her, he thought the possibility of that was considerable. Rooms, rooms everywhere. And everything was so astonishingly still. What had become of his feet? He missed the familiar clatter they had made on the Narrow Alley staircase; and besides he seemed floating in air. He was quite relieved that it was only the carpet which gave him the uncanny feeling. The carpet was another thing to which he would have to get used.

Mrs. Duveen opened a door, to be met by Dulcie's rather sulky:

"Well, you *have* been a time, and I want my tea so."

"But, my dear, I had to see about Phil, hadn't I?" replied Mrs. Duveen.

"Of course, you had to see about Phil."

Mrs. Duveen sat down to the table, resolving to look into this matter later on. She handed Dulcie and Phil their cups. Phil took his dumbfounded. They called this tea. Why, it was a school treat. Cake on an ordinary Friday afternoon? Only once every twelvemonth his mother laid in a reasonable supply of cake—on the New Year's Day, on which it is policy to eat sweet things, so that the coming year may be sweet and pleasant to you. How he and Leuw had cut into those slices of honey-bread! Once Leuw even swallowed the bake-paper that stuck to the bottom, and didn't feel hungry any more for the rest of the day. Phil felt a kind of pity for the honey-bread. True, it had tried hard to make him happy for ten

minutes every year, but if it only knew what a poor thing it was compared with. . . .

"I like Fridays," announced Dulcie suddenly.

"Do you?" asked Phil absently, capturing an escaped raisin.

"Because I may stay up longer in the evening." Mrs. Duveen assumed an air of reproof.

"You shouldn't say that, Dulcie; surely that is not the only reason why you should love the Sabbath Eve."

"But, mamma," expostulated Dulcie, "I'm only small, and I haven't got room in me to love it for more than one reason at a time."

Mrs. Duveen did not know whether to laugh or to look grave; but she was saved the trouble of making up her mind by the opening of a door and the appearing of a big pleasant-faced man.

"Uncle Bram," shouted Dulcie gleefully, as she romped up to him, and dragged him into the room by both hands.

The big man tried desperately to give himself the most forbidding look and voice.

"Young lady, are you aware that I haven't yet said 'good afternoon'?" he growled.

"O, never mind; you can say it twice next time," replied Dulcie flippantly; she was used to Uncle Bram's playing at "bogy." Then, standing on tip-toe, she whispered with a jerk of her head at Phil:

"We've brought him."

"Come over here, Bram," called Mrs. Duveen. "I want to introduce you. Phil, dear, this is my brother. I hope you will like him."

"Glad to know you, Master Phil," said the big

man, cordially, stretching out his hand to Phil, who grasped it clumsily.

"Hope you're getting on all right," replied Phil, according to the formula of Narrow Alley.

"First rate, my boy, first rate," laughed Uncle Bram, tickled by the queerness of it. Then he caught his sister's look of enquiry.

"I don't see the resemblance you speak of," he replied in an undertone, "but otherwise first impression distinctly pleasing. You know, at best it was a leap in the dark."

"I don't think I've made a mistake, though, Bram."

"Remains to be seen, my dear, remains to be seen."

"What is he to call you, Uncle Bram or Mr. Alexander?" queried Dulcie.

"If he's good, Uncle Bram; if he isn't, he mustn't speak to me at all. Do you hear that, Master Phil?" threatened the big man jocularly.

"Oh, I'll be good right enough; but it isn't always your fault when you're bad," returned Phil, facing him firmly.

Uncle Bram looked a little astonished. "H'm, there's something in that; I'll keep it in mind," he said finally, smiling at Mrs. Duveen.

After that Dulcie monopolized the talk. It was quite two days since she had seen her uncle, and there was a whole budget of news: The reckless behavior of the kitten in slipping out on to the pavement, the poor old doll which would surely have gone into a decline if Jane hadn't quickly patched up the hole where the sawdust leaked, and so on.

Phil listened interested in spite of himself. It was rather a novelty to hear people make a fuss about

trifles of that sort; in the part of the world where he came from, little girls chiefly worried about feeling cold or hungry, or father being out of work, or mother in hospital. But he became a little uncomfortable, and was sorry Mrs. Duveen had left the room, when Dulcie went on to her visit eastward. Spitalfields might be fun to her, but to him it was grim earnest, and he did not want it joked about. However, Dulcie did not tread on any of his corns, though there seemed precious little point about her concluding remark:

"He's got a brother, you know."

"That's not very terrible," joked Uncle Bram. "I know a lot of boys who have. Still, what about his brother? Out with it."

"Oh—well—oh, nothing particular," said Dulcie, floundering hopelessly.

Mrs. Duveen re-entered the room. "I think we had better have Service at once, Bram; I daresay Phil is tired," she said.

"Just as you please, my dear."

"Oh, yes, let's have Service," said Dulcie delighted. "You see," she informed Phil, "Uncle Bram always says prayers with us Friday nights because he's a—a—what is it you are, Uncle Bram?"

"Now, then, I won't have you tell everybody I'm only a bachelor."

"You shouldn't be one, if it's wrong," said Dulcie sternly. "And mamma, you know—it's all right, she can't hear; she's gone to fetch the candlesticks—mamma never goes to synagogue, because she can't bear to see that red ugly man sitting where papa used to sit."

Mrs. Duveen returned with two candlesticks of mas-

sive silver. The sight of them awoke no strong admiration in Phil. His mother, too, had a pair of Sabbath candlesticks; true, the silver coat on them was a little threadbare, but a special glory attached to them in being the only household movable which had never known the defiling scrutiny of the pawnbroker. And though Mrs. Duveen's might claim more "ounces," they could hardly pretend to be the embodiment of much heroic self-denial. He had to confess, however, that her manner of kindling the Sabbath lights was quite as impressive as his mother's. Of course, she did not spread out her hands over the candles, and then clap them to her eyes as his mother did; but she just pulled herself up to her full height, looking very stately, as befitted one who was welcoming in a royal visitor—the Princess Sabbath, as the phrase of the Jewish poet goes. And the words of the benediction fell from her lips so clearly and distinctly that even the two flame-tongues stood up steady and erect as though they knew what a great honor had been allotted to them. And when, presently, Jane came in and lit the three gas-jets, there seemed to be no perceptible increase in the illumination of the room.

Immediately Jane had left the room, Uncle Bram took on himself the duty of Precentor. His rich, sonorous voice, which somehow showed that he had a heart as well as lungs, fitted him for it admirably. And there was no scamping; he began from the very beginning of the Service: "Oh, come, let us exult before the Lord: let us shout for joy to the Rock of our Salvation," he read. And his congregation responded reverently: "Let us come before His pres-

ence with thanksgiving; let us shout unto Him with psalms." And though Phil felt a little out of it when they came to the traditional chants which he did not know, he enjoyed it tremendously. Everything was so quiet and tender and full of loving humility. It was all so different to the hubbub and gabble-gabble of the little prayer-house which he and Leuw used to attend, where everybody was shouting at the top of his voice as though to compel God to listen to him rather than to his neighbor. Surely, this was a much safer way of sending one's prayers to their proper address.

And then Dulcie came in for her turn; one could see she had been awaiting it eagerly. Phil received quite a shock to hear the familiar English accents break in on the old Bible tongue.

"And the heaven and the earth were finished and all their host," read Dulcie with a fluency and flawlessness evidently due to considerable practice. Phil traced her every syllable with rapt attention. The refined prettiness of her speech struck him forcibly. He became painfully conscious of his own shortcomings in that respect, and resolved to remedy them; here he was safe against Yellow Joe's ridicule at his attempts to "talk grammar." A deep sense of gratitude, of conciliation, stole into his heart, making it very soft towards the little fury as she had appeared to him during the carriage incident. And when she finished up:

"May the service of Thy People, Israel, be ever acceptable unto Thee," he thought how greatly forbearing he had been in not grumbling with God for having refused to give him a sister.

After that the service soon came to an end. It was followed by mutual wishes for a "Good Sabbath," with handshakes and kissing. Phil came in for his share of the last from Mrs. Duveen and Dulcie. He took it quite easily; it seemed to him part of God's worship.

"Dear me, I feel quite hungry," said Uncle Bram, recalling them to things earthly.

"Jane has laid supper in the dining-room; we can start at once," said Mrs. Duveen, leading the way out into the room on the opposite side of the hall.

"Why, there seems quite a lot of us to-night," cried Dulcie as they took their seats.

"Phil, you ought to feel flattered to know you make so much difference," laughed Uncle Bram.

But Phil felt neither flattered nor anything else. His capacity for wonderment had been strained to its utmost pitch to-day, and now refused to act any further. He had become callous—one might almost say *blasé*. And so he took everything in matter-of-fact style, the glittering table accoutrement, the plentiful supper, the serviette, which last seemed to him a purposeless waste when people had coat sleeves. Of course he mixed up everything, used the meat fork for the fish, and scooped up the gravy with the pudding-spoon. Dulcie, horrified at these atrocities, looked at her mother for permission to interfere; Mrs. Duveen, however, firmly signaled an injunction to silence.

"Wants licking into shape," whispered Uncle Bram to his sister.

"Of course he does; knowing where he comes from, did you expect to find him ready-made?" smiled Mrs. Duveen, with equal caution of tone.

So the supper passed off without any contretemps, if one is to omit Phil's upsetting the pickle jar, which made him consider the advisability of offering to pay for the washing of the table-cloth. And then Uncle Bram said grace, and Dulcie chimed in again at the end with a quaint little thanksgiving of her own. She said it very slowly, with a beseeching look at her mother. But even that did not keep off the inevitable.

"Now, Dulcie, half past eight," said Mrs. Duveen significantly.

"Shall I ring for Betsy?" asked Dulcie with touching resignation.

"No, I shall see you to bed myself to-night."

"Oh, mamma!" cried Dulcie, clapping her hands. It was a very unusual privilege.

"Bram, you will look after Phil for a little while."

Then Dulcie said good night, and followed her mother out.

She found the latter strangely silent all the way up to the bedroom.

"What are you thinking of, mother?" she asked, when there.

"I am very sorry, Dulcie, but I have to scold you."

"Scold me, mamma? Why, what about?" The little mouth quivered.

"You spoke rather crossly to me before."

"Crossly, mamma? When?" The wide open eyes filled.

"When I fetched Phil down from his room. I don't mind so much being hurt myself, but it must have made him feel very uncomfortable. I only want to tell you to be more careful in future."

Dulcie's chest heaved pitifully once or twice, and then came the torrent of tears and words.

"Oh, mamma, I knew it was wrong at the time, and I had made up my mind to beg your pardon, and I forgot because I was enjoying myself so much. But I was sitting by myself, and all at once I felt so lonely, and I haven't anybody in the world to love me but you, and now you are beginning to get fond of Phil, and I didn't know what was going to happen, and I didn't care what I did to myself or anybody else. . . ."

The torrent of words disappeared, swallowed up in the other torrent. Mrs. Duveen stood speechless. "I haven't any body in the world to love me but you." Ah, that was a plea which ought to sweep away whole mountains of offense. How grossly unjust she had been to her child; she had cruelly, nay, almost maliciously, misinterpreted a sacred sentiment into an act of ill-temper. For that she owed her a great reparation.

"Dulcie!" and the next moment mother and daughter were in each other's arms, almost choking back their tears by the closeness of the embrace.

"And you will never love anyone as much as me, mamma?"

"Never, never, dearie."

"Not half as much?"

"Not a quarter."

"And we'll both try very hard to be kind to Phil, won't we?"

And then, with but little suasion, the dark curled head was coaxed on to its pillow, and the dark dreamy eyes looked up with a wonderful sheen in them. Can there be a greater happiness than to fall asleep with your guardian angel watching smilingly by your bedside?

Downstairs, meantime, the proceedings were of a more matter-of-fact nature.

"Well, have you made up your mind what you are going to be?" asked Uncle Bram of Phil, when they were alone.

"No, not yet."

"Oh! Most boys your age have some idea of what they would like to be."

"There's a lot of things I'd like to be. Only I'm waiting to see what I'm most fit for."

"H'm. But what are you going to do while you're waiting?"

"Learn as hard as I can."

"Study is what you mean, I suppose. Think you're good at it?"

Phil paused a moment. "You'll fancy I'm bragging."

"Nonsense. If you hide your light under a bushel, it may go out. Well?"

"I was monitor in every class I was in, and I never got less than two prizes a year, and once the Inspector patted me on the head."

"That's a good record certainly. Still, education doesn't pay nowadays. If you'll take my advice you'll go into business and be rich."

"I don't want to be rich. My brother Leuw does. I want to learn Latin and pass examinations. I've always wanted to," Phil reiterated doggedly.

"And suppose my sister refuses to send you to school."

"She mustn't," broke from Phil; "it's against the agreement."

"What agreement?"

"The one I made before coming here. Ask her to show it to you."

Uncle Bram struggled with his laughter. "So you made your conditions in advance? Well, I must admire your prudence. Still, what if she refuses after all?"

"Then I'll go back home."

"You wouldn't find the way," quizzed Uncle Bram.

"Oh, yes, I would. I noticed there's a 'bus going from the corner right down to the Bank, and I'd run behind it. I shall be all right at the Bank."

"Under those circumstances," Uncle Bram pretended to reflect, "we had better see what we can do for you."

Phil silently tapped the floor with his heel; then he said bitterly:

"I knew how it would be. First she spends all those sovereigns in the shop this afternoon, and now there's nothing left to pay the school money. But it's in the agreement."

Here Uncle Bram threw himself back in his arm-chair, and unmistakably guffawed.

Phil stared very hard to see the tears streaming down the big man's cheeks.

"Call yourself clever," gurgled Uncle Bram, "and don't see that it's all my—what d'you call it down your way—my blarney?"

"What's the matter, Bram?" asked Mrs. Duveen, entering suddenly.

Her brother told the joke, and though just a trifle annoyed, Mrs. Duveen could not help smiling.

"Don't you believe him," she re-assured Phil; "he's a wicked tease."

But Phil was satisfied with nothing short of a direct statement.

"You'll send me to school, though—Aunt?"

"Of course, as much as ever you like."

"In that case," said Phil with the air of a conqueror, "I'll go to bed."

And he went, after the usual formulas. Jane accompanied him as far as his door, though he would much rather have dispensed with her escort. Now that he was going to stay in this house for some time, the sooner he mastered its geography for himself the better. He disliked being shown things by other people; he far preferred finding them out "on his own." There was more sport about it, and he was feeling quite jaunty just now.

Slowly he undressed. Another novel experience was awaiting him: for the first time in his life he was going to sleep alone in a bed. And that brought his mind to his old bedfellow, to Leuw, who in turn led on to his mother. Did that mean that he had neglected them all the evening? No, he could not reproach himself. Though the last few hours had been full of crowding emotions, they had at the bottom of them a great hollow, an instinctive emptiness. That hollow was his longing for his dear ones; and when one comes to think of it, the love which is most worth having is that which is the undertone of life rather than its melody.

"God bless mother, God bless Leuw." He thought the words, they were too sacred for utterance. And then came the spirit of youth; and carried him on Ariel wings to that most splendid of God's dwellings—the Palace of Dreams.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN Leuw awoke the following Monday morning, he was not dismayed at the feeling of responsibility that hung so heavy over him. He had anticipated the feeling, and the responsibility was of his own making, and it would have been stupid to be afraid of anything but what one cannot understand. Nevertheless, it was with more devoutness than ever that he fastened round his arm and head the phylacteries without which no Israelite above the age of thirteen may recite his morning prayer. The unfamiliar passages from the Psalms and the liturgy, through which he as a rule had to spell his way painfully, this morning came smoothly off his tongue; he had finished when, according to his reckoning, he ought only to have been half-way. He was pleased; it seemed quite natural that the readier utterance would meet with readier acceptance.

For this was the day whereon Leuw Lipcott had resolved to begin his struggle with the world. His plan of campaign was made up; the sinews of war were represented by the two shillings and three half-pence which he had earned by his porter's work the preceding days. Had these been his only resources, he might well have felt doubtful of the issue. But he knew that in addition he had a vast and inexhaustible capital, from which he could help himself whenever occasion demanded. That capital was himself.

His mother had been up since quite early that morn-

ing. But instead of betaking herself to Mrs. Diamond to begin her task, she fidgeted about the room in a make-believe busy way, which was only too obvious. Leuw wondered at it, but a ray of intelligence broke on him when he saw her hurry downstairs at the sound of the postman's knock. Why, of course—there should be a letter from Phil; Leuw had forgotten that, had almost forgotten Phil himself in the anxious scheming and dreaming to which he had given up his mind for the past two days. But he did not feel sorry for it; the sudden reminder thus conveyed to him would act as an additional mnemonic. It seemed to him that henceforth every postman's knock would come as a greeting from his brother Phil.

Phil's letter was short. To Leuw's ears it sounded as though a weight of awe and wonder had lain upon the writer, and would not let him speak out; but such as the letter was, it informed them of his well-being, and contained assurances of his undying affection. The envelope, however, contained something besides Phil's communication. Leuw opened the neatly folded little note, read it and put it in his pocket.

"What does he say there?" asked Mrs. Lipcott, anxiously.

"It ain't from him—it's from her."

"Her?"

"The little girl—only some silly rot!"

Mrs. Lipcott did not enquire further, first, because if Leuw did not volunteer information, it was no use enquiring, and secondly, because she knew as much as she wanted to know—that Phil was well and thinking of her.

Now she could go to her work.

"I suppose you won't be doing anything particular to-day," she hazarded.

"I might—I might not," was Leuw's enigmatic answer.

"There's a bit of fish left over, you know."

"And you're going to have it for breakfast presently. It's time you ate something since Friday."

"Don't be foolish, Leuw."

The wrangle did not last long; as usual Leuw gained his point. But Mrs. Lipcott ate with a strange feeling of sacrilege; for this hard, dry haddock tail seemed to her nothing but the incarnation of her child's love for her, and love was meant to be food of the soul and not of the body.

Leuw remained motionless for fully five minutes after his mother's departure. He was taking the earliest opportunity of thinking over the exact import of what, at the pinch of the moment, he had styled "silly rot." And presently he came to the conclusion that he had spoken very much in haste. He took the note from his pocket to see if he had read it aright. Yes, there it said plainly:

"I'm sorry I made you hold my hand the other day when you did not want to. Your truly Dulcie Duveen."

It certainly did not seem silly now; the silliness perhaps consisted in his letting the few words give him such delight. Well, even if it did, he did not care. It was so pleasant to know that he was being remembered, to know that somebody who was not in duty bound to do so, as were Phil and his mother, thought of him when there were many more acceptable things to think about. Somehow it made the world seem not

so desolately, hopelessly large—it made him feel a good deal less solitary. And all that he owed to the little note.

Furtively he looked round him. The gleaming copper kettle blinked at him knowingly. With a defiant glance at it, Leuw pressed the scrap of paper to his lips, and thrust it back into his pocket. That's what people did in the story-books, and Leuw did not always insist on being his own tradition.

Then he got back to his workaday mood. He went to the cupboard, and from the quartern loaf therein he cut four slices of tolerable thickness, and wrapped them in an old sugar-bag. They would be enough to last him till supper, which was supposed to make good, more or less, the shortcomings of breakfast, dinner, and tea.

When Leuw finally got out into the street, it seemed to him that the day had already made considerable progress. A glance at the nearest shop clock, however, told it was only a quarter to nine. A second glance showed him Yellow Joe bearing down on him to the detriment of everything that did not happen to be his size.

"Well, you are good-uns at keeping things dark," he began.

"Eh?" asked Leuw nonchalantly.

"About Phil, you know," was Joe's explanation.

"Yes, we did keep it rather dark, didn't we?" said Leuw calmly.

This frank admission of his guilt rather staggered his accuser; the latter, however, was not inclined to let Leuw off so easily.

"I know, too, why you did," he asserted.

"Oh, indeed?"

"Yes, indeed. You was afraid that if you let out, somebody else would try to jump into Phil's place."

"Take you long to find that out?" asked Leuw looking straight at him.

"It's the truth, anyhow," insisted Joe, sheepishly.

"And how d'you feel telling the truth?"

"Now, then, cheeky, mind yourself," threatened Joe, being stung by the taunt into the sudden recollection that he was Leuw's senior by two years.

"I'm going to; don't you fret. Want to know anything else? Because if you do, you'd better hurry up—haven't got any time."

"Why, where are you off to?" asked Joe inquisitively.

"To find some people that don't poke their nose into other people's business."

"Here, don't get so chippy over it. What I do is nothing to what other chaps do, sneaking round to worm things out of you and all that."

"Whom d'you mean?"

"This same brother of your'n. The other day he meets me and asks if I knew any swells, and I says 'yes,' and what they was like, and I says, 'good enough at a distance,' and all the while he had made up his mind to go and live with 'em. Nice to kid a pal like that—ain't it?"

"What! Phil asked you about the toffs?" enquired Leuw with affected asperity.

"He did," replied Joe, joyfully, at the thought that he had reaped ample revenge in having made a Cain and Abel out of the two brothers; "he did; ask him yourself."

"Good luck to him, too; shows he's got his wits about him."

"Had again, by Jingo," growled Joe, punching himself violently in the chest. By the time he had recovered his equilibrium, Leuw was walking off. But that was not how Yellow Joe wanted the incident to end.

"Hi," he shouted.

"What's up now?" asked Leuw, looking back crossly.

"Oh, that's right; get into a temper with a chap, because he's going to do you a good turn."

"D'you mean yourself? Then I beg your pardon."

Joe had his doubts about the sincerity of the apology, but otherwise he did not let it interfere with the workings of his evil mind.

"Dare say you're looking out for a job," he said.

"I am."

"Now listen. Know Little Hare Street?"

"Up Hackney way?"

"Right. Number 50. Man Sampson there— keeps tailor's workshop; wants a boy. His foreman lives in our place; that's how I come to know of it. Pound a week to start with; fancy, pound a week!"

"Fancy!" repeated Leuw, seemingly much impressed.

"Here's your chance. Tell the foreman I sent you, and you'll be all right."

"But why don't you go for it yourself?" Leuw thought fit to object.

"Because I'm better off where I am. Guv'nor promised to make me a partner soon as I'm grown enough to marry his daughter."

The reason seemed to convince Leuw.

"S'pose they're already suited though?" he remarked finally.

"Can't be; they're not going to advertise till to-morrow. Shouldn't advise you, though, to waste more time about it."

"Little Hare Street, number fifty?" asked Leuw, his foot poised ready for the start.

"Fifty or fifty-one—you can't miss it."

"Pound a week?"

"With five shillings rise every year."

Joe's heart leapt exultantly; already he saw Leuw off on his fool's errand, searching desperately for an imaginary workshop owned by a non-existing Mr. Sampson, who wanted a fictitious errand boy at a mythical pound a week. He pictured to himself Leuw, tired out with searching a whole street and heart-sick with disappointment, gradually awakening to the crushing fact that he had been ignominiously hoaxed. Oh, if he could only be there and see it all!

Yes, there he was off at last, that silly young Leuw, who thought himself so clever—why, bother him, here he was coming back again; no doubt more questions—and consequently more lies to be manufactured, grumbled Joe, who hated an unnecessary expenditure of energy.

"I almost forgot," said Leuw in an unfathomable sort of way.

"Forgot what?"

"Why here I was going off without thanking you kindly."

"Oh, never mind about that; only too pleased to help an old pal."

"Well, I can put you in for a good thing, too."

"Can you?" cried Joe eagerly.

Leuw thrust his face to Joe's so closely that their noses almost touched.

"Yes, the champion liar of the world's dead, and they want a new one. For particulars apply to Number fifty, Little Hare Street."

CHAPTER X

LEUW walked on, chuckling contentedly. In his ears still rang the yell of disgust wherewith Yellow Joe had fled—nay, it was more than flight; it was a rout, a stampede. Slight as the incident was, it pleased Leuw out of all proportion. On this, the most momentous day of his life so far as it had gone, it was only natural that he should try to forecast the future and construe even trivial things into augury of good or evil. He had reason to be hopeful. First there was that little missive which had flooded his soul with sunshine. Then there was Yellow Joe's discomfiture. Yellow Joe represented to him a malignant world doing its worst to lay him by the heels; well, it had evidently come off second best in the attempt. In any case, it impressed him strongly with the value of keeping one's eyes open. Oh! yes—he would keep his eyes open; he had made up his mind on that.

The very next moment he belied his resolution by running full tilt against a lamp-post. That wouldn't do at all. The time for dreaming was over. Dreaming was the privilege of children; it had never rightly belonged to him, because he never could remember himself as a child. Perhaps that was a pity, now that he came to think of it. Well, if it was, he would feel sorry for it some other time, when he had more leisure on his hands.

Quickly he crossed over Whitechapel High Street, and got into Brick Lane, one of East London's nar-

rowest arteries, but one pulsing feverishly with the hard-strained efforts of its thousands and thousands of toilers in the grim struggle for bread. From every quarter struck on Leuw's ear the maddening whirr of the machine-wheel, the sickening thump of the press-iron, the click of the nailer's hammer. He knew that the average space for each one of the workers was about four feet square—even less than would make a decent-sized grave—and yet there were more and more of them hurrying past him to the scene of their toil—men, women, children, teeming forth wantonly, as though the great city were bent on showing how much life it could afford to waste. Wasted life indeed! There it was visible in pale, wan faces, stoop-shouldered frames, and all the other tokens of premature decay. That was what the workshop did for them—the workshop, that wholesale assassin! It stunted their bodies, it blunted their souls; it crumbled their thoughts, and put that stony look into their eyes.

Leuw shuddered. Thank God, that was not going to be his lot; he thanked God for putting it into his mind to seek out for himself a less pernicious, a less deadly sphere for work. His workshop, at any rate for the present, was to be the free open sky, the wide spacious streets, where he need not stint his body for room nor his lungs for breath. One day, when he had become rich and his voice loud enough to be heard—he knew that there was no better sounding board than money—one day he would take this matter into his own hands. He would tell these people what he had heard that tall black-bearded gentleman say at the last prize-distribution: that there was really

no need for them all to huddle together in one place like a drove of frightened sheep; that they should space out more and not frantically crowd each other dead; that they were to get out of the beaten groove of their occupations—there were other things to be done in the world besides the making of coats and boots. And above all they were to take note that soap was cheap and cleanliness first cousin to godliness. Leuw remembered that speech, every word of it, simply because it was not the usual commonplaces about obedience to teachers and love for parents, but because it was meant to go right home to the parents themselves, and Leuw had enjoyed hearing the grown-up people get a scolding for once in a way. Now, however, he felt the truth of it all. Yes, as soon as he was rich, he would make it his business. . . .

He pulled himself up angrily; where was the sense of providing for other people when he himself needed all his own care and energy? Surely "charity begins at home" had often enough stared him in the face as a copy-book text. But he had no time to reproach himself. There, a couple of yards further on was his destination.

This proved to be a little shop receding modestly between its neighbors on either hand. The frontage of it was a window divided into four panes of solid-looking glass, each thickly puttied round the rim—the whole presenting an aspect of premeditated defense. And, indeed, the contents of this same window were all calculated to set the marauding instincts of any ill-regulated youngster on edge. Brandy-balls and creams alternated in artistic confusion with shuttle-cocks and woollen lambs, stick-jaw and almond-rock

with penny whistles and tin trumpets, while higher up gaudy paper covers announced that they contained inside them instalments of the entrancing histories of such evergreen heroes as "Broad Arrow Jack" and "Dick Turpin" or "Good Black Bess."

Leuw paused a moment outside to feel the two shillings and three half-pence reposing snugly in his waistcoat pocket and to adjust to his face an expression of unutterable business-likeness. Then he stepped in. The shop was empty, but in the tiny parlor behind Leuw could see an old man having his breakfast at a table from which he commanded a full view of his whole domain. At Leuw's entrance he leisurely wiped his grizzled moustache, rose somewhat stiffly, and came to the counter. His limping gait with its alternate thud-thud told the tale of a wooden leg.

"Well?" he asked, fixing Leuw with hard, shrewd eyes.

"I want to do business with you—in the wholesale," replied Leuw.

The old man looked at him more closely.

"How much for—thousand pounds?" he quizzed.

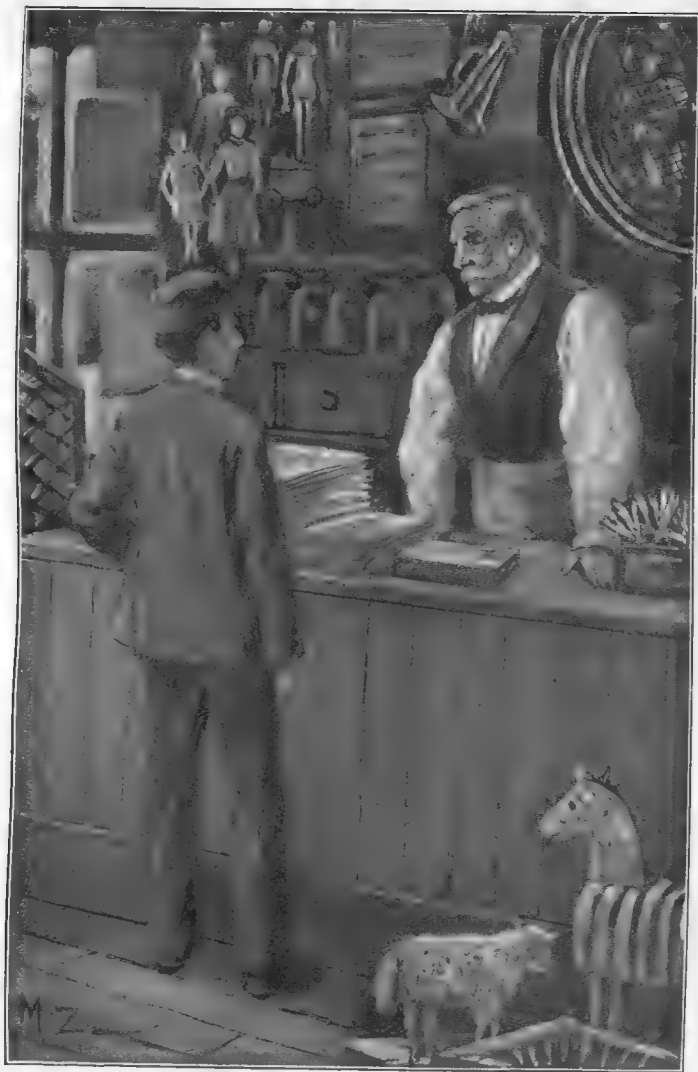
"Yes. I'll pay two shillings and three ha'-pence cash, and the rest you can let me have on credit."

The shrewd look in the man's eyes gave way to a twinkle which gradually extended over his whole face; then he threw back his head, and laughed till he nearly fell over, and had to sit down on the stool behind the counter.

"Well, I'm blest," he gurgled at last.

Leuw watched his merriment with displeasure.

"I ain't come here to be fooled about," he said gruffly.



"I WANT TO DO BUSINESS WITH YOU—IN THE WHOLESALE."

"Who's fooling you?" replied the old man, now quite serious. "I was only alaughin' at the sharp way you took me up. Thousand pounds? Why, you can buy up old Christopher Donaldson, shop, parlor, wooden leg and all for a twenty-pound note, and get some change out o' that."

"And I didn't mean any harm, either," said Leuw, a little ashamed of having given way to temper so easily.

"In that case, sonny, we'll start all over again, as if you'd only just come in. Good mornin', what can I do for you?"

"I'm going to set up in toys, and I'll deal with you if you'll let me have things cheap."

"You're a bit young, ain't you?" said Christopher.

"Oh, I'll grow out of that. Will you let us have a penny article for three farthings? Mind you, I'm wholesale."

"Do you really mean it?" asked Christopher, who still seemed considerably puzzled by the whole transaction.

For answer, Leuw took all his available capital out of his pocket, and placed it on the counter; then he put his hands back into his pockets. The four six-pences and the three half-pence lay between him and Christopher without the least possible clue of determining their ownership.

"I told you how much I had," said Leuw, looking full at Christopher. The latter appeared to be turning something over in his mind.

"Anybody can see you're a bit green at the game," he said finally.

"How d'you mean?"

"What's to prevent me making a grab at this little lot"—he pointed to the coins—"and saying it's mine?"

"Nothing," replied Leuw calmly; "but you couldn't—not while I was looking at you."

"Yes, but I shouldn't advise you to try that too often."

"And for another thing," continued Leuw with the same equanimity, "seeing that I trust you, there's more chance of your trusting me."

"H'm. You're a Hebrew boy, ain't you?" asked Christopher after a little pause.

"And proud of it," replied Leuw, raising his voice half in defiance.

Christopher leaned forward and tapped him confidentially on the shoulder.

"And I don't blame you for it, neither," he said. "You can show up some grand men amongst you. Only to mention some in my real line—which same is the 'thin red line'—you've had Saul and David and the Mickybees and Sydney Mitchell that was the finest of 'em all."

"Sydney Mitchell? Never heard of him," said Leuw puzzled.

Christopher looked very cunning. "Of course you wouldn't have heard of him, because he wasn't Sydney Mitchell at all—he was Solly Myers."

"Ah!" exclaimed Leuw, beginning to understand.

"He told me all about it the night before Inker-man," went on Christopher pensively. "You see, me and him was together in the Seaforth Highlanders, and he had changed his name, because he didn't want the boys to ask him where Moses was when the light

went out; and that same night he had a feelin' as how he was booked, and he didn't want to go to God with a lie, and so he must let out to somebody."

"And was he killed?" asked Leuw in an awe-struck whisper.

"Killed dead. And I had a good deal to do with it. There I was layin', bleedin' to death, with my left shank all in splinters, and he says: 'Christopher, I don't like to see you gettin' so white about the gills,' and he ups me on his shoulder, and the moment he gets me to hospital, down he flops stone dead. And when they turns him over there was a five-inch long lance wound in his side. That's what a dirty rascal of a Cossack did for him while he was havin' his hands full of me, and couldn't defend himself. But he didn't let me drop, youngster; he didn't let me drop, not Sydney Mitchell. There's a Victoria Cross gone to waste, if ever there was. If I knew his address in heaven, I'd make the War Office send it on after him—see if I wouldn't." And Christopher shook his head threateningly.

"Perhaps it might go through the dead-letter office," suggested Leuw flippantly, in order to battle down the emotion which he felt was beginning to glisten in his eyes.

Christopher smiled sadly. "Yes, that's what made me take to your people," he continued; "only you seem more of a sort with him than any of you I've met." Here he reached out his hand—"Let's shake to the blessed memory of Syd Mitchell, or Sol Myers, or to whatever name he answers the roll-call up aloft."

Leuw complied, not a little surprised at the turn the conversation had taken; but even stronger than

his surprise was his pleasure at the compliment old Christopher had paid him.

"What makes you think I'm like him?" he asked.

"I don't know what, and I don't care what, but you can take your Davy on it that it's the nicest thing anybody's ever said to you. And for fear you should get conceited, we'll just quit the subject and come to business."

"Nothing I'd like better," said Leuw.

"Now you want these penny articles at three farthings; I'll let you have 'em at that, because I'm my own manufacturer, which the cost price of 'em is a ha'-penny; that just leaves a farthing profit for each of us, don't it?"

"That'll be fifty per cent for you and thirty-three for me," calculated Leuw.

"Well, if you think that sounds more, have it that way. Now, you just pick out the things you want. And while you're doing it, I'll look round in my lumber room for the tray I used to wear, before I'd saved up enough money to start this 'ere shop with. Come round this side of the counter if you like. Wait till I get out of it though; this stump of mine doesn't always go the way I want it to."

As Leuw watched him hobble back into the parlor, he thought it a fine opportunity to turn the tables on old Christopher.

"I say," he called after him. Christopher stopped and poked his head out from inside.

"What's to prevent me filling my pockets and being off before you know where you are?"

"Nothing, except that you know that I trust you," replied Christopher.

For a moment or two they looked very seriously at each other, and then they burst out laughing; and from the sound of their laughter an uninitiated listener would have fancied that they had known each other at least for a lifetime.

When Christopher returned, he brought with him a square green-painted board to which was attached an arrangement of shoulder straps.

"Here's your shop," he said. "I'm not going to charge you any rent for it neither."

"I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure," said Leuw, who had only just come to see from what a difficulty Christopher's loan relieved him.

"Is this what you've picked out?" said Christopher, looking at Leuw's selection of toy pistols, pea-shooters, and mouth-organs. "Well, let me put them on. I know my way about it better than you."

But even with Christopher's practiced manipulation the portable bazaar could not be made to accommodate more than twenty-eight articles.

"Here's your change," said Christopher, handing him five pence.

"Half-penny too much," said Leuw counting.

"Oh, no. That's a half-penny discount for ready cash."

"Quite right. I ought to have asked for it myself," said Leuw, viewing the matter from a strictly commercial aspect. "I'll be off now. So long. See you later on."

"Here, wait a bit," cried Christopher; and stooping, he pulled out an old horseshoe; "just grab hold of that—for luck." Half laughing, Leuw reached out his hand; then he pulled it back with a sudden thought.

"I—I'd rather not," he said, looking frankly at Christopher.

"Why not? It's clean enough."

"It isn't that. I don't think our God would like it; it would almost be like worshipping the idols."

Christopher's arm drooped slowly, and presently the horseshoe fell to the floor with a dull clang; then he thumped the counter with his fist.

"You'll do, my boy," he exclaimed. "By Jingo, you'll do."

Leuw nodded vaguely and walked out, wondering what there was in what he had said to make his new friend so emphatic in his commendation. But his wonder did not interfere much with his full consciousness of the epoch-making nature of his errand. Now, indeed, he had started in real earnest; he had hung out his sign, and was making his bid to the general public, or, at least, to that unsophisticated section of it which still thought the proper occupation of mankind was play.

He considered; it was only ten. That would leave him two hours to choose a good pitch. A good pitch was the main thing. Schools abounded within easy walking distance of where he was; but he would have to find one which was not provided with its own particular tuck and toy shop in the immediate neighborhood. He knew how conservative children were. So he searched patiently, with the happy result which is a proverbial reward of patience. The school in question turned out to be a foundation school, much to Leuw's satisfaction, because its population was likely to be endowed with more available cash for luxuries than that of a mere Board School. It was

now within a few minutes of noon, and Leuw planted himself firmly against the railing opposite, because he knew what was coming. Then a bell shrilled inside, and the sound of it was followed by a vague confused noise as of thunder gathering in the distance; presently the doors opened, and an avalanche of tumultuous young vitality flung itself out, overswept the street, and surged on in a compact mass for a yard or two before scattering into its yelling components.

"Penny each—any article you like," sang out Leuw. For the first time in his life he regretted possessing an alto instead of a treble, which would have more chance of piercing the din. But such as his voice was, it succeeded in attracting immediate attention. Once more the old economic truth that a supply creates a demand was brilliantly vindicated. The penny which was intended for a feast of toffee-apples felt that it could not achieve a higher purpose than to convert itself into a mouth-organ. Besides, the "any article you like" sounded wonderfully seductive, suggesting, as it did, to the would-be purchasers an opportunity of choosing among all the products of the world. In addition, the youth of the merchant was a sure guarantee that they were not being cheated, which was more than they could expect in dealing with men of adult wickedness.

And so it was that within ten minutes from commencing actual business, Leuw was clean "sold out," and what was more, he could have disposed of twice as much, for the contagion had spread extensively.

"All right, gentlemen, I'll be here again when you come back," he consoled the disappointed ones. And he hurried off, gleefully chinking the pennies in his

pocket. The "gentlemen" he thought a particularly happy touch.

Old Christopher opened his eyes wide when he saw the empty tray.

"What, been robbed, or given them away?" he asked solicitously.

"Neither," replied Leuw, and out came the pennies, and with them the story of how they had been acquired. Christopher listened in silence, and then startled Leuw by calling himself a bad name.

"Strike me lucky, kiddy," he went on, "but you're worth a dozen old 'uns. Now what did I do? I stumped about the City and such like grown-up places where I wasn't wanted, waiting for a stray customer to come up, and waitin' a jolly long time very often. But you? You go hittin' the nail on the head right away and—well, all I can say is, you'll do, my boy—you'll do."

Meanwhile Leuw had been replenishing his stock, and started out again in high spirits. He got back to his pitch a good ten minutes before the recommencing of school. But a sore disappointment awaited him. This time there was no run on his goods; a reaction seemed to have set in. Leuw's cry: "Penny each—any article you like," fell on unheeding ears. Those who felt some inclination to purchase were held back by the thought that they would be able to obtain these penny articles—slightly damaged perhaps—for next to nothing when, in a day or two, their present owners would have become surfeited with the joy of possession.

Despondently he turned away as the burly school porter came out to shut the main entrance. The tray

in front of him had suddenly become quite heavy, and was dragging his head low down on his chest. But presently he drew himself up with such a jerk that the toy pistols and mouth-organs began to play at leap-frog. Where was his common sense that he should allow himself to become miserable over a trivial little incident like this? If he were to score success after success, he would be a millionaire before he knew what real honest work was; and there wouldn't be any fun in that. Indeed, his signal failure, following so closely upon his signal good fortune, was nothing but a timely warning of Providence that the worst error a man can fall into is to expect that things will go his way and to forget that there are ever so many people trying to make them go theirs. He would store that warning up in his heart, and thank Providence doubly for not making him the victim of a mistaken kindness.

Having thus regained his equanimity, it struck him all at once that he was hungry. That could be easily remedied. He wondered what sort of a dinner Phil was having. If Phil had a better dinner, Leuw had a better appetite; so they were quits. A neighboring cheese-shop tempted him in vain, not from stinginess, but because the knowledge that he could indulge himself served for the indulgence itself. A drink of water from the fountain down the next street, and he was ready once more against all odds.

He made his way towards Victoria Park where he knew—it would be hardly fair to tell whether from personal experience or not—the truants from the East End schools were wont to foregather. He was fairly lucky at the set-off, disposing of four articles to a

quartet of sinners, who were loyally helping one of their number to squander the savings of months in one riotous, reckless holiday. After that came on a lull, but Leuw had resolved to effect a clearance sale, and somehow the resolve seemed to guarantee the result. So it did, with the additional advantage that, by that time, Leuw was convinced he would not become a millionaire as prematurely as he had feared. He showed it pretty plainly when, about seven o'clock, he staggered into Christopher's shop to return the empty tray.

"Not quite found your street legs yet, eh, youngster? I was luckier than you; you see I only had to find one leg." And Christopher chuckled at his own grim jest.

Leuw made no answer, but leant heavily against the counter.

"What, as bad as all that?" said Christopher alarmed, raising the counter flap and pulling him through. "Here, come into the parlor, and I'll make you a cup of tea in two twos—a good strong cup. You must be more careful next time. You'll do, but you mustn't overdo."

Leuw followed him listlessly, and allowed himself to be set down in the wooden arm-chair. Christopher nimbly filled the kettle, placed it on the spirit lamp, and stood watching it, with occasional glances at Leuw; he, however, kept a persistent silence, as though he were afraid that, if he talked, the water would stop to listen instead of hurrying on to boiling point. It was not till he had emptied his cup to the bottom, and was taking his second that Leuw found strength to utter a word.

"It *was* stupid of me, wasn't it?" he said smiling shamefacedly.

"I wouldn't call it such a hard word as that," compromised Christopher. "That sort of thing happens to the best of us."

"Did it ever happen to Sol Myers?" asked Leuw.

"Bless you, yes; twice to my recollection he had to fall out and get into the ambulance, and your muscles are just pap to what his were. Once it was because he wouldn't have any supper the night before and no breakfast in the morning, and we were marching at the rate of three and a half miles an hour on to Balaklava, and all the nurses put together couldn't wheedle him into touching a drop or a morsel before nightfall. I've often wondered at it."

"What time of the year was it?" asked Leuw breathlessly.

"O, as far as I remember, somewhere about late autumn."

"Then I can tell you why," said Leuw with shining eyes.

"O, can you?" was Christopher's eager question.

"He was keeping the White Fast—the Day of Atonement, you know, when the Jews all over the world fast and pray to have their sins forgiven. Fancy, and Sol Myers didn't forget the White Fast!"

"Didn't I tell you he was a grand man?" said Christopher brimming over with enthusiasm. "I'm sure the reason he was called away so early was that God wanted him in His body-guard."

Leuw pondered over the remark, but the speaker's manifest sincerity redeemed it from the charge of irreverence. Then he got up.

"I ought to be going now; how much?"

"How much? What for?" asked Christopher.

"The tea, of course."

Old Christopher set his lips tight till his moustache positively bristled. At the same time he breathed like a choking grampus.

"Well, of all the impudence that ever took tea in another man's house," he exploded finally. But he quickly checked himself when he saw Leuw's look of terrified amazement.

"There, there, don't get so scared about it; it was only my fun," and he stroked Leuw's head with a hand that was as light as a feather.

"I didn't know how to take it," quavered Leuw.

"Take it that you've got the good heart and I the bad manners; but you'll know next time, eh?" There was some little anxiety in Christopher's voice.

Leuw was quick to notice it and to surmise its cause.

"The next time and every time after. I say, have you any chil—I mean have you anybody living with you here?"

"Nobody of my own, if that's what you want to know. Never had."

Leuw nodded; so he was right in his conjecture.

"I'll be coming in to-morrow morning," he said.

"Good night."

"Good night; God bless you," replied Christopher, seeing him to the door.

And Leuw walked away with a feeling that, like Phil, he, too, had been adopted. This was the longest day he had yet lived through. The morning of it lay somewhere away in the dim past; the evening of it was

a distinct stride into the future. He knew the length of that stride; it measured exactly one shilling and three pence—a farthing on fifty-six articles sold and a penny discount on the two lots. But the actual profit—and it was good, considering the outlay—was not the main point. He had set up for himself a record; all he had to do in order to attain what he aimed at, was to go on breaking it. He ought to earn that week—counting Friday as a half-day, because the Sabbath set in early—somewhere about seven shillings. He might earn that as an apprentice, and the work would be easier. But he had intended no idle boast when he told Phil: “Leuw Lipcott and no Co.,” nor was it a mere motto of selfishness. He wanted his toil and the fruits of it for himself; his hungering, his weariness were to be in his own service. He wanted to be free, because freedom means self-respect, and self-respect means strength, and strength means victory.

His mother had come home before him; he was glad the lamp was burning so dimly, because he still felt rather white.

“Hullo, mother, had a hard job to-day?” he accosted her.

“Not very; I really believe she only asked me round to tell me what a great thing she had done for me; but she paid all right.”

“I suppose she can do what she likes for her money. And that reminds me.”

“Reminds you of what?”

“That from to-day you are to consider yourself my landlady.”

“Why, Leuw, what do you mean?”

"Only that I start paying for my board and lodging."

Mrs. Lipcott's incredulous smile turned to something quite different as Leuw told the day's history; and her hands, into which the borax had eaten sores, suddenly left off smarting.

"Leuw, why are you so good to me?" she asked at the end.

"Because Phil isn't here, and I've got to be good to you for the two of us."

Leuw was very tired, but he dared not fall asleep before he had given five minutes of pious thought to Solly Myers, to whom he owed his friendship with Christopher, and who was keeping the long White Fast under the Crimean snows.

CHAPTER XI

MR. ALEXANDER, or rather Uncle Bram—he was one of those men whom people are inclined to call uncle on the slightest provocation—took an early opportunity of submitting Phil's name for admission to the big Metropolitan Public School, which he himself had attended till entering his late father's stock-broking office. With undisguised satisfaction Phil received the tidings that he was to hold himself ready for the preliminary test, on which he was to be assigned his class, in three weeks from date. It seemed jolly—an examination right to begin with! They evidently meant business at that school.

And now that this important point had been settled, there was no obstacle to putting into effect Mrs. Duveen's hint to Phil's mother—the visit to the seaside. It was nearly two years since Mr. Duveen's death. When the first summer season came round, she had, despite the urgings of Uncle Bram and all her friends, refused to indulge in anything which might be construed into gratification of self; that was the least she owed to the memory of the departed. This summer she had given room to the intention, but had put it off far into the season, with the vague idea of avoiding the months during which her husband had defied the calls of the city, and had given her his company. Now, however, there was no further excuse. She owed the holiday to her little daughter and—she hardly dared acknowledge it to herself—her son's substitute.

Mrs. Duveen, in announcing the fact to Mrs. Lipcott, asked whether the latter preferred coming to St. John's Wood—with Leuw of course—to say good-bye to Phil, or whether she herself was to bring Phil down to Narrow Alley. Mrs. Lipcott wrote in reply that she did not think either necessary, and that she hoped they would all enjoy themselves very much. Phil was not hurt; he understood. There had been enough heart-break in one leave-taking; why repeat the agony?

As for Leuw, he just scribbled:

"No time; got to be out all day." From which Phil inferred that Leuw had carried his threat into execution, and was fighting the world.

"Hope he'll win—hope he'll win," he kept muttering to himself, till Dulcie's astonished gaze confounded him into a full stop.

But Phil was not destined to go before seeing at least one old acquaintance. It was the morning fixed for their departure, when, half an hour before the carriage was appointed to take them to the station, Jane announced a visitor.

"A lady?" asked Mrs. Duveen rather uneasily. She did not want to be delayed.

"That's why I said somebody, ma'am," replied Jane; "I don't know if she's a woman or a lady; but she talks rather loud, and I said we were going off directly."

"Have you asked her name?"

"She wouldn't tell me; she didn't think you knew her."

"Well, show her in," said Mrs. Duveen resignedly. A second or two later and through the open door

in walked nobody less than Mrs. Diamond, clothed in the pick of her wardrobe and a halo of paste jewelry. She paused for a moment as though to gather impetus, and then, spreading out her arms, she swooped down like some ungainly bird on poor astonished Phil, and caught him in a rapturous embrace.

"Oh! you sweet pet, oh! you little dear, aren't you glad to see me?" she bubbled.

"Lemme go, Mrs. Diamond," gasped Phil, "you're crushing my collar."

His matter-of-fact reply seemed to reduce Mrs. Diamond to a more normal state of mind. She turned effusively to Mrs. Duveen, who had listened and looked in manifest surprise.

"I hope you don't mind me, Mrs. Duveen, but you know what it's like when your feelings get the better of you, and I'll just explain. . . ."

"I am afraid I haven't very much time now," interrupted Mrs. Duveen gently.

"Yes, I know you're on the jump to be off—you know what I mean—but I'll only keep you a tick or two," went on Mrs. Diamond, loosening her bonnet strings and plumping down in the nearest chair.

"Now, of course, in the first place I must tell you who I am, which is Mrs. Diamond, Mrs. Lazarus Diamond, and my mother—God bless her soul—was cook to the old Rabbi Aaron—God rest his soul—and he always used to say to her, 'Esther,' he used to say—but I must tell you about that another time, you understand what I mean. Now, for years and years I have always taken an interest in the Lipcotts, haven't I, Phil?"

"I s'pose so," said Phil, pulling his ruffled clothes straight.

"See?" cried Mrs. Diamond, turning his grudging admission into a full corroboration. "I'm not telling you any lies, God forbid; and, of course, you know that but for me you would never have got hold of Phil."

"No, I don't know," said Mrs. Duveen, astonished.

"What! you don't know? And I thought Mrs. Lipcott had told you all about it," said Mrs. Diamond, who knew perfectly well that Mrs. Lipcott hadn't, because she had questioned her on the subject that very morning. "Well, if it's anything I hate, it's to blow my own trumpet, but it's only fair to you that you should know the truth of the matter, in case somebody else should try to get something out of you on the strength of it—you understand what I mean."

And then Mrs. Diamond related for the fifty-second time the history of the Board of Guardians' letter which had wrought such epoch-making changes in the Lipcott household.

"And, of course," she concluded, "knowing that it's all my doing, I couldn't rest till I'd come and seen with my own eyes that dear little Phil was happy and well taken care of and all that sort of thing—you understand what I mean."

"I understand," said Mrs. Duveen stiffly, "but you might have guessed it."

"Certainly, certainly," admitted Mrs. Diamond, quick to see that she had made a mistake, "but when it's a case where the child had nearly been your own . . ."

"What's that?" broke in Mrs. Duveen.

"You see, me and Diamond have been a bit lonesome since we married our two girls off to the Prov-

inces—and very good matches they both made, bless 'em—and many a time I thought to myself: What if I took little Phil to live with us? You understand what I mean. Well, I'm very glad it turned out like it did."

Phil cheerfully agreed with her. He was pleased, too, to have been spared the knowledge of what Mother Diamond—as he and Leuw irreverently called her—intended with regard to him; thus he had been saved unnecessary tribulation of soul.

"Have you seen mother lately?" he asked.

"Saw her just before I came away; but I didn't tell her where I was off to, else, of course, she'd have sent her love."

"And Leuw—do you know what he's doing?"

"Who ever knew what Leuw was up to?" said Mrs. Diamond, evidently resenting Leuw's refusal to take her into his confidence; and then she went on, shaking her head ominously, "Ah! I am afraid Leuw—well, he's not like you, Phil."

"No, he's a good sight better," replied Phil promptly.

"There, isn't he a dear?" appealed Mrs. Diamond to Mrs. Duveen.

The latter smiled. She felt that she had not shown herself very cordial to her visitor, but that was because she had regarded her with a vague fear. She did not know what claim this woman with her overwhelming voice and manner might have on Phil; but Phil's own arm's-length attitude re-assured her completely.

"The carriage is waiting, ma'am," announced Jane.

"I hope you won't think me inhospitable, but I

should like to catch this train; it's so awkward to have your arrangements upset," said Mrs. Duveen pleasantly.

"Oh! yes, very awkward," assented Mrs. Diamond, rising reluctantly. "I know how I should feel about it myself. But, of course, now we've made friends, we'll see a good deal more of each other, I hope. It's so pleasant to come across somebody you can talk a sensible word to. And then, if you want any wrinkles about poor-visiting, I'm the party for you. Only the last time I was talking to Lady Simmondson—me and her Ladyship are great friends, you know; I suppose you've heard of her. . . ."

"We are first cousins," replied Mrs. Duveen quietly.

"Are you really?" cried Mrs. Diamond ecstatically. "Well, I was telling you, says her Ladyship: 'Mrs Diamond, there isn't a soul in London that knows better than you what the East End wants.' But then, of course, I am a bit of a public character—you understand what I mean. I am subscriber to three bread-meat-and-coal societies and president of the Inlying Charity of the Women of Bialostock, and the only lady on the committee of the new Free Dispensary, not to mention . . ."

"Ma'am, John says we haven't a moment to spare," broke in Jane. Mrs. Duveen made a resolute movement to the door.

"Well, I suppose I must go now," said Mrs. Diamond regretfully, "but as soon as you come back . . ."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Duveen hastily, without caring what she was pledging herself to by her affirmative.

Jane had snatched up the traveling satchels and hurried down, closely followed by Phil and Dulcie.

Mrs. Diamond kept abreast of Mrs. Duveen all the way down, determined to make the most of her chance and nearly taking her listener's breath away by her whirlwind-like utterance.

After the briefest possible leave-taking, which Mrs. Diamond tried hard to elevate into an occasion of great ceremony, the three gained the refuge of the carriage, and Mrs. Diamond was left standing on the curb wildly waving her handkerchief, though contrary to her firm expectation Mrs. Duveen's head did not appear through the window to note the salute.

"A bit stuck-up," she communed with herself, "and she might have asked me to come and see them off to the station."

But the disappointment was amply atoned for by the triumph of having added a "carriage lady" to her visiting list.

Probably, too, it was against etiquette to be asked to take a ride on the first occasion. Mrs. Diamond had only hazy notions of etiquette, but she put it somewhere on a level with the Ten Commandments. At any rate she would have given the price of a new bonnet, had her bosom friends, Mrs. Preager and Mrs. Tannenbaum, seen her come out of that lovely house. But they would hear all about it, see if they wouldn't. And they did. Sad to relate, however, Mrs. Diamond made it appear from her account that she had paid the call, not on her own initiative, but in response to a written invitation. Only that ass, Diamond, had gone and lit his pipe with the letter.

CHAPTER XII

MRS. DUVEEN had wisely refrained from the soul-racking anxiety which most people think it necessary to bestow on the choice of their summer resort. For more reasons than one she had gladly fallen in with the suggestion of her cousin, Mrs. Elkin, to join her in the little Devonshire coast-nook which was making its first attempts at being a seaside place.

All the way down in the train, Dulcie was jubilant at the prospect of meeting her crony, Effie Elkin, with whom she had had no chance of quarreling for quite two months. Phil sat silent and subdued, greedily feasting his eyes on the luxuriant greenness of foliage and meadow, and wondering how he could possibly make his mind still more receptive for the far greater glories which, on Dulcie's solemn assurance, would soon dawn on his dazzled vision.

"What's that?" he cried, sitting up suddenly, his nostrils quivering and widespread. A sense of something pungent had struck him, a delicious sense that was like nothing he had felt before, and tingled through him from head to foot and back again.

"You're not going to be seasick, are you?" jested Mrs. Duveen.

"Is that—is that the sea?" quavered Phil.

"Look through the other window," directed Mrs. Duveen smilingly.

Phil did as he was told and blinked. There, far across the meadow land, lay what appeared for all the

world a patch of molten sunlight, glinting away very soft and quiet as though it knew there was really no necessity to make itself look more beautiful than it did. No doubt it was conscious that it had to teach the world a lesson.

"Yes, there it is," whispered Phil, his hand brushing away the haze from his eyes.

"I wonder if Effie's as freckled as she was two years ago," said Dulcie in a matter-of-fact tone. And the spell was broken.

According to previous arrangement, Mrs. Elkin and Effie met them at the station—a pocket-edition of its kind. There were cordial greetings, and Phil was introduced. He wriggled beneath Effie's frankly inquisitive stare.

"Now, then, Tiny, you walk with the mummsies," said Effie, who, happening to be two months older than Dulcie, made despotic use of the accident.

"And what are you going to do?" asked Dulcie.

"Talk to this make-believe brother of yours. I want to see what he's like."

"Effie, don't be so fast!" remonstrated Dulcie.

"No, dear; no more than I can help."

"You're horrid! And I'm dying to know all about the place. Any niggers?"

"All in good time, Miss Paul Pry. Now just get behind."

Dulcie yielded sulkily. Phil, who was slowly sauntering on a pace or two in front, started to find the bold-eyed little girl at his side.

"What sort of a boy are you?" she asked.

Phil did not believe his ears, and favored her with a rather blunt:

"Eh?"

"Eh—eh," mimicked Effie, "too much trouble to say, 'I beg your pardon,' is it?"

"No, it isn't; only I couldn't find breath enough. You came so sudden."

"Well, as long as you're sorry. Dear me, and now I've got to ask you all over again, and it's so hot. What sort of . . ."

"Hadn't you better wait and find out for yourself?"

"I don't like waiting, it's so tiresome. And then it's much easier to make other people do things for me than do them myself."

"Well, suppose I don't tell you the truth?" fenced Phil.

"Oh! I'd soon find that out; and then I wouldn't speak to you again."

Phil was greatly embarrassed. The threat sounded genuine, and he could hardly be sure that his self-estimate would tally with the truth, because, as a matter of fact, it had never struck him to estimate himself.

"Well?" asked Effie, eyeing him relentlessly.

"I say, I wish you wouldn't bother me," replied Phil, goaded to desperation. He fully expected that the little inquisitor would toss her black glossy mane, and march off haughtily; but to his surprise—his agreeable surprise, by the way—he was mistaken.

"Well, it is rather an awkward question to ask," admitted Effie sweetly. "It's a bad habit I've got into. Mother always tells me so."

"Really?" asked Phil, putting much sympathy into his voice.

"I don't like the way you said that 'really;' any-

body would think I had told you I had only got one lung like Jacky Smithers, next door to us."

"I didn't know it sounded like that," apologized Phil.

"Are you fond of the seaside?" queried Effie in a voice of unutterable boredom.

"I don't know yet; but I think I shall like it very much."

"You think? It's time you had made up your mind about it, I should say."

"You see I've never been to the seaside before," said Phil, as though owning to some vast crime.

Effie said nothing, but her eyes rested on Phil as on an inexplicable phenomenon.

"At least, father was once going to take us to Southend for the day, but he didn't have enough money. And then he died before it got summer again."

Effie grew still more mystified. "Didn't have enough money? Then why didn't he go to the bank and get some? That's what we always do."

"Father never belonged to any bank; he only used to make slippers."

"Oh! then you're quite poor people."

Phil drew himself up stiffly. "Oh! yes, we're quite poor people," he replied haughtily.

"And I suppose you live in the East End? Because that's where all the poor people live. I asked papa about it."

"Yes, we live in the East End," said Phil still more haughtily.

"Oh, you lucky boy!" exclaimed Effie.

"Go on chaffing as much as you like. Think I care?"

"But I'm not chaffing," protested Effie; "I'm quite serious. It must be splendid down there. Did you ever see the old Irish women sitting on the door-steps smoking pipes?"

"Saw them, many a time," said Phil.

"And don't the brass bands come round four times a day?"

"More than that, some days."

"And nobody says a word to you whether you wear a pinafore or not."

"Can't tell you about that, I'm sure."

"Of course you can't; you're only a boy. And the girls needn't put on gloves every time they go out."

"Oh, no!"

"See? I know all about it," cried Effie triumphantly. "Our Maria comes from there. It must be a fine place for getting into scrapes—isn't it?"

"I don't know. I never got into scrapes. I don't like it."

"I suppose you're a bit of a softie," hazarded Effie.

"Am I?" Phil turned on her sharply, but Effie did not flinch.

"Go on—hit me, if you like," she said defiantly.

"You're awfully flash, aren't you? You know I wouldn't."

"Well, come behind the hedge and nobody'll see."

"Oh! I'd do it here, if I wanted to."

"I know why you don't. You're frightened I'll scratch you back."

"I don't care what you'll do. I know what I won't do—get into a scrape."

Effie burst out laughing. "Oh! you are sharp. Don't you see? That's just what I was trying to make you do. It nearly came off, though, didn't it?"

Phil stopped short, taken aback by this instance of female duplicity; then, lest she should think the laugh was all on her side, he joined in with gusto.

"You see, I'm getting to know what sort of a boy you are, after all," boasted Effie.

"Yes, but you're doing all the work for it," retorted Phil.

Here Dulcie, who all the time had been consumed with curiosity about what was going on in front, came running up.

"What were you laughing at?" she enquired.

"Your snub nose," replied Effie promptly.

"'Tisn't true, Dulcie," said Phil equally promptly.

"But you know you have got a snub nose, Dulcie," said Effie unabashed.

"Oh, Effie! How can you say anything so untruthful? Yours is ever so much snubber."

"Now, Phil, you be umpire; whose is?" said Effie, appealing to Phil.

"Yours is, I'll lay any odds," was the unhesitating decision.

"Oh, thank you, Phil," cried Dulcie gratefully.

"It's no thanking job. If yours was, I'd say so just as soon. Ah!"

The exclamation was wrenched from him by the sudden bend of the path, which exposed in panorama the green shimmering hill-hollow wherein the little fishing-village nestled cosily. The bay in front of it was just one large good-humored smile, and sportive tiny wavelets leaped gleefully inland, as though to entice the demure cottages to come down and play with them.

Phil fancied he had all at once shrunk to the size

of a pin's head, he felt so small and subdued. In particular he repented not having had the courage to own up to his ignorance as to what a snub nose really was; and so there was a strong possibility that his decision against Effie was unjust. He did not want to decide against any one—justly or unjustly. He wanted to be at peace with everybody. But his most urgent desire was to pray. He knew that in the Daily Prayer Book is given the blessing one must utter at first sight of the ocean. He would have given all his new clothes if he could remember how it went. Then he became comforted; he felt his eyes were getting moist. The blessing could not have found a better substitute.

By this time the "mummsies" had come up, and stood watching him smilingly.

"You seem to be pleased, Phil," said Mrs. Duveen.

Phil started. "I never thought it would be like this," he said, flushing.

"Well, don't eat it up altogether, or you won't have any appetite for lunch," jested Mrs. Elkin.

Dulcie and Effie were racing down the hill, screaming with laughter, their hair and frocks flying like the sails of some strange craft. With a wild whoop Phil snatched off his straw hat, leapt two feet into the air, and bounded after them, his right forearm stiffly in front as if he were guiding the bridle of the wind. The joy of life had gripped him mightily.

"I am glad to see he is waking up," said Mrs. Duveen to Mrs. Elkin; "the first few days he went about as if he saw and heard nothing."

"Perhaps he was afraid of the waking up," suggested Mrs. Elkin. "In the places from which he comes it isn't good for people to feel very keenly."

"You mean he is beginning to trust his senses at last."

"Look at him," laughed Mrs. Elkin; "I certainly wouldn't take him for a sleep-walker."

At the foot of the hill there was a general reunion.

Dulcie and Effie were disputing who had won the race. Phil was again pressed into service as referee, and disposed of the question by saying that neither of them knew how to run, but if they were good girls he would teach them. For which offer Effie showed herself most grateful, and promised, as soon as she had time, to return his kindness by giving him a few hints on manners.

The cottage wherein the Duveen party was to quarter was twin and next-door neighbor to the Elkin's, and stood right facing what the natives vain-gloriously talked of as the "esplanade."

Lunch was awaiting them at Mrs. Elkin's. Everybody had second helpings—Phil thought he would require at least four or five when he started; he learned to his relief that this was due to no abnormal enlargement of his digestive organs but simply to the peculiar workings of the air. And curiously enough everybody talked of it in a way which ought to have made the air swell with conceit.

"Come on, get your pail and shovel," said Effie to Dulcie when the meal was over.

Dulcie obeyed readily. Phil wondered what the pails were for; for emptying the ocean they were obviously insufficient. He expressed this opinion to the girls in all good faith; and even in later days, the mere mention of it was enough to raise a laugh. Chap-fallen he followed them down to the beach. He

was little affected by Dulcie's ridicule; it was Effie's that told on him so severely. He could not make up his mind about her at all. But somehow he felt that he and she would either be the best of friends or mortal enemies. No half-way measure seemed possible. And that was why he struggled so hard against feeling angry with her; once he did that, it might be the thin end of the mortal-enemy wedge, and he didn't like the idea of it. Lazily he watched the two girls raising the pyramids of sand. He had brought with him "Treasure Island," but it lay beside him unopened. Sea and sky seemed ever so much better reading; he could almost feel his mind becoming full of knowledge, his heart of understanding.

"Mine's nicer," began the wrangle presently.

"No, mine; look, yours is all lopsided."

"You needn't ask me. I'm not going to say a word," declared Phil.

"And pray, who is going to ask you, Mr. Meddler?" said Effie.

"You were; you know you were."

Effie looked at Dulcie. "I suppose we were," she said at last.

"I suppose so too," said Dulcie.

"And I shouldn't advise you to quarrel so much. It'll make you ugly," said Phil.

"Will it?" cried both Effie and Dulcie in a breath.

"Well, that's what happened to the two girls in the story," said Phil.

"What story?" was, of course, the next question.

Phil thought a little, and then began a harrowing tale about a certain Sue and Sal, who, through saying nasty things to, and making wry faces at, each other,

grew so hideous to look at that they only had to enter a house, and all the milk turned to vinegar, and all the sugar to salt, and the best steel knives went rusty, and the purest gold became copper. At last their mothers turned them out, and, of course, nobody else would take them in, and they had to wander about through the rain and the darkness all by themselves. And just as they lay down to die, calling each other names all the while, up came a good fairy that happened to live near, and told them to poke out their tongues, and just touched the tips with her wand. Whereupon Sal and Sue immediately fell round each other's necks, and kissed each other, and Sal called Sue a darling, and Sue told Sal she was awfully sorry for having brought her to such a misfortune. And then they went back to their homes, but their mothers refused to let them in, saying they were impostors, because their daughters were ugly little vixens and not beautiful and well-spoken young ladies. So they went out again into the world, but they hadn't gone very far when they met two handsome young princes who fell in love with them, and took them to the king's palace and married them. And they all lived happily ever after.

"Where did you read that?" asked Effie, who had followed the narrative breathlessly.

"Nowhere," replied Phil. "It just came into my mind all at once."

The two girls looked at one another.

"Oh, Effie, isn't he clever?" said Dulcie.

"Can you make up any more?" asked Effie.

"I'll try," said Phil modestly; "I don't know if it will turn out any good, though."

"Never mind; you're only fishing for compliments," replied Effie.

"I say, Effie, don't you think we had better kiss first?" suggested Dulcie. "Jane would be so cross if she had to polish the knives all day."

"You stupid—don't you know it's only a fairy tale?" laughed Effie.

"Still, you know, it's best to be on the safe side."

"Well, perhaps you're right. Hold up. That's it; and another one."

"I wonder what mischief those little imps are hatching; look how quiet they are," said Mrs. Duveen to Mrs. Elkin.

The two were sitting in a tent, which had been fixed up in the strip of garden in front of the two cottages.

"For goodness' sake, don't break the spell; you know what Effie is," laughed the other.

In the end, however, they were obliged to take the initiative after all.

"What, tea-time already?" asked Effie incredulously of Jane, who had been dispatched to call them in.

"It's on the table, Miss," insisted Jane.

"I simply don't understand it," declared Effie; "do you?"

Dulcie didn't either. Phil did, but that was because he felt so dry and husky in the throat. Otherwise he was much more mystified than the other two put together. It was no strange thing to him to find all sorts of odd ideas crowding his brain. Many a time Yellow Joe had come across him standing at the street corner in a fit of abstraction, and had called him a sulky brute for refusing to gamble with him in but-

tons. And Phil had chuckled to himself to know that he was really having a very good time, while Yellow Joe thought him a hopeless victim of the dumps. But he had never tried to put his ideas into words, first because he had no listener, and secondly because it was best to let well alone; they mightn't sound as nice as they felt. This was his first attempt—a genuine success, as Effie's "I simply don't understand it" told clearly. Of course, the buoyant air, the soft-crooning sea, the caressing sunshine had a great deal to do with it, but somehow most of the credit belonged to Effie's dark eyes. They listened so hard, they fetched the words out of his mouth before he had time to know they were there.

"Mummsy, Phil can tell stories," shouted the owner of the black eyes excitedly.

Mrs. Elkin threw up her hands in mock horror. "I shouldn't have thought it of him."

"Not the way you mean, but all about fairies and castles, and you never know what's going to happen, can you, Dulcie?"

"There's the whole secret for you," said Mrs. Elkin to Mrs. Duveen.

"Did he tell them nicely?" smiled the latter.

"Splendid; all out of his own head, too."

"In that case we are all going to treat ourselves to a row after tea."

Phil was not prepared for the outburst of delight that followed. It did not make him proud so much as glad, glad that he had put Effie under an obligation so early in their acquaintance. She acknowledged it readily.

"You aren't a little softie," she informed him as they tramped down to the beach.

"I told you I wasn't," was his instant reply.

Phil had never been on the water before; but he did not give a thought to danger. Already he was learning to love this green, immeasurable mystery. He had got as far as pitying it; it looked so lonely. The brave smile that kept rippling its surface seemed nothing but a mask. The expedition was very uneventful as, of course, everybody, except Effie, wished it to be. Effie longed eagerly—she did so each time she went into a boat—for a storm to come on, "just to see what it felt like." She raised several false alarms in the hope of inciting an innocent fleck of cloud down in the sky into taking her at her word; and at last despairing of that, she furnished the only incident of the voyage by wheedling the old boatman into letting her try an oar, and immediately turning a backward summersault over the thwart. Nobody laughed more heartily than she, although none of the others felt such a painful numbness in their left elbow. After that Phil asked to have a "go," and got on very creditably considering the circumstances. Effie listened with conflicting emotions to old Jobson's grunts of approval. She was glad to have come across Phil; he was so different to the other boys she knew—with the difference in his favor. But she hoped he wasn't very much cleverer than she, because if people praised him too hard, she might get jealous, and you can't be friends with people you are jealous of—bah! she was stupid. Old Jobson would have been flattered, had he known his grunts gave her so much food for reflection, and—here they were back again aground, and Phil helped her out before Dulcie, at which she was absurdly pleased. It was too early to go in to

supper, so they stopped on the beach, and Phil, with fascinated gaze, watched the miracle of the incoming tide, as myriads of boys have done before him, and will do after him. Effie and Dulcie treated it much less respectfully; they played "touch" with it, waiting till the landward wave had crept within an inch or two of them and then scampering off with shriek and squeal.

Phil almost felt inclined to read them a lecture, when Effie rushed up and shouted in his ear:

"Come on; you're missing all the fun. There, look at that wave—wasn't it spiteful?" At the same time she gripped him by the hand; and presently Phil—lecture and all—was joining in the game, and a tricky little breaker had sprung full in his face to the vast delight of his luckier playmates.

It was arranged that the two house parties should meal together at Mrs. Elkin's, and nine o'clock sharp had been fixed for curfew-time. Half an hour remained after supper, and Phil had just taken up his "Treasure Island" with diplomatic apologies to that grand old villain, John Silver, for neglecting him all day, when a sudden burst of music made him sit right up. Mrs. Elkin and Effie had seated themselves at the small-sized cottage piano, and were playing a duet, at least that was what Phil heard Mrs. Duveen call it. Old John Silver had to retire once more into the background.

Phil listened spell-bound to the quaint, plaintive composition—it was the work of some one whose name ended in "ski." There was a subtle note of fitness about it that accorded wonderfully with the spirit of the moment. The darkness peered in pathetically through the window, the complacent flapping of the

waves had turned to a long-drawn moan; and the sadness of it all was unutterably sweet.

Phil was back once more in the cobwebbed little Prayer House with its Old-World chants and its atmosphere of wistful resignation. His old life and the new seemed to have met and made a compromise; he was filled with a comforting sense of reconciliation. Of late, he had become something of a stranger to himself. He was Phil once more.

"How well I shall sleep to-night," he could not help murmuring.

The music ceased with a sustained monotone.

"Oh, Effie, how you have improved," cried Dulcie. "I wish I played half as well." Effie did not answer her, but cast a swift glance at Phil; he was staring at her with wide open eyes, but for all that he did not seem to see her.

"Well, when you've left off gaping," she said to him pettishly.

"I—I wasn't gaping," stammered Phil, dropping the book in his confusion.

"Now, then, chicks—off with you," commanded Mrs. Elkin.

Strange to say, none of the "chicks" raised a remonstrance, though time wasn't up by quite a quarter of an hour. Phil snatched a moment's tête-à-tête with Effie as she was replacing the music in the stand and whispered:

"You can sing ever so much better than I can tell stories!"

"Can I?" was the astonished reply. "Why, I never opened my mouth."

"Not with your mouth—with your fingers, you know. Good night."

Effie thought for a moment, then her face became radiant. She forgot to return his "good night." Phil refrained from glancing at the sea in his transit to next door; but he went and had a good look at it through his bedroom window, from behind a barricade, as it were. The tide was full and breaking against the rock-sprinkled beach. Phil's imagination at once construed the numberless white dots of surf into a million rebellious little spirits trying to clamber out of the dark and the wet into more comfortable quarters; but each time, just as they were about to succeed, an inexorable grasp dragged them back, and the sullen boom that followed was like an angry rebuke to their disobedience. Phil became frightened; perhaps the sea was angry with him, too. He remembered he had dared to pity it; he, the mean, human worm, had dared to pity the infinite and the eternal. It was like insulting God. And then, all at once, there came a lullaby, which, soft as it was, overbore the sullen boom, and hushed his fear to slumber. Effie's fingers were singing the lullaby. He was glad he had drunk in every note of it. Had he missed even a single quaver, it would not have done its work so effectually, and he would have gone to bed feeling that the perfectness of the day had been marred by one irreparable fault; and this could not have counted as a day of days for him. Now, however—yes, he slept very well that night.

Such was, more or less, the routine of their stay. About the middle of the third week a welcome diversion was occasioned by a surprise visit of Uncle Bram and Mr. Elkin, the latter a grave-faced, middle-aged gentleman who said very little and smoked a great deal.

"And who may you be, pray?" asked Uncle Bram with a twinkle in his eye.

Phil, to whom the query was addressed, drew back disconcerted.

"Why, don't you remember me?" he stammered.

"Of course, it's Phil," said Uncle Bram, pretending to recognize him at last and shaking hands emphatically. "You'll excuse me—won't you?—but I never knew a boy to grow twice his size in a fortnight. You had better give me notice next time you intend to put on a foot or two."

Phil glowed with pleasure. He was glad he was developing a physique; he had always had an idea that the bigger he grew, the more knowledge he would be able to accommodate. Another inch or two might make all the difference.

A short conversation between Dulcie and Uncle Bram, as they promenaded along the sea-front that evening, was rather significant of the state of relations which had prevailed among the three younger members of the party.

"I suppose you have been enjoying yourself like one o'clock," remarked Uncle Bram.

"Well, not so much as I thought I would," replied Dulcie a little dolefully.

"Oh! how's that?"

"I don't know—yes, I do know; it's Effie and Phil."

"What! you don't say they've been bullying you?"

"Oh, no, not the least little bit; only they make me feel so out of it."

"Seems, then, they've been chumming up together, eh?"

"Oh! ever so much. And if they let me come with them, it was like doing me a favor."

"Then, why didn't you tell your mamma about it?"

"That would be like sneaking; and she might have said it was my fault, and that I didn't try to make myself sociable."

"That's true. Well, I should have gone and told them plain and plump."

"I shouldn't. Think I wanted to let them see I cared?" exclaimed Dulcie with an ominous sniff.

"And if he'd rather talk to her than to me"—Dulcie fumbled for her handkerchief—"I suppose it's because she's prettier than I am."

"But she isn't," said Uncle Bram, with a conviction that would have stopped an avalanche.

"And he isn't half as nice as his brother Leuw, and I've got a good mind to tell him so."

Uncle Bram persuaded her to refrain from a revelation which might annihilate Phil's good opinion of himself, and being of a peace-loving disposition, set about rectifying matters generally. Under his genial influence the strain of faction relaxed so effectually yet so imperceptibly as to make Dulcie doubt that it had ever existed. In consequence she endeavored to make good by a redoubled sweetness of manner the injustice she had done Phil and Effie by her groundless fancy. And that, combined with Uncle Bram's untiring resourcefulness of amusement, served to cast over the remainder of their sojourn a halo of consummate happiness.

Natural, therefore, in a way, was the moody and discontented look which Effie noticed on Phil's face the evening before their return to town. The two were standing on the seashore watching the sun drop beyond the horizon. Phil had long ago got over his fear that the red hot ball would go out with a hiss

and a whizz as it touched the water-line, though his wonder, how it managed to escape, remained unabated.

"I suppose you are sorry to go away from here," suggested Effie.

Phil shook his head. "No, I was only thinking how selfish I have been. It didn't come into my mind the whole time, and now it struck me all of a heap."

"Why, what have you been selfish about? I didn't notice anything."

"What! Didn't you see what a jolly good time I've been having?"

"Yes, but you didn't take it away from anybody else."

Phil ignored her, and continued half to himself: "And all the while I dare say she's been going it—rub, rub on the wash-board—from morning to night, and the steam from the copper scalding her face, and the sun shining his hottest through the skylight in the wash-kitchen, and the blisters, and a couple of hours' mangling when it was all dry, and Leuw . . ."

"Well, it was their own fault," broke in Effie.

"What do you mean?" cried Phil, turning on her almost fiercely.

Effie glanced away helplessly, but Phil's threateningly questioning look followed her everywhere till it forced her to speak out.

"I wasn't to tell you, but Auntie Duveen wrote them to come here for a few days, or as long as they liked, and she was going to send them the money, and they wrote back they were much obliged, and they wouldn't."

"Of course, they wouldn't," echoed Phil grimly.

"Why of course?" asked Effie.

"Because they don't care about taking favors from strangers. They're proud—awfully. I wish I could be as proud as all that."

"Oh, Phil!"

"What's wrong now?"

"I didn't think you'd say that."

"And what did you expect me to say, please?" asked Phil, chillingly polite.

"That Auntie Duveen is a dear, and that it was sweet and kind of her to . . ."

"By gum, you're right, Effie, and—d'you mind calling me a beast? I'd do it myself, but it wouldn't sound hard enough."

Effie was about to burst out laughing; Phil's puckered lips, however, stopped her.

"Oh, Effie, Effie—I feel so sorry for them," he said with a break in his voice.

Silently she took his hand in hers and stood stroking it.

"And the worst of it is that all my worrying doesn't do any good," he went on.

"No, Phil, that's the best of it. It's why you shouldn't worry."

Another minute of stroking, and Phil began to see it in the same light.

"Jingo, ain't I going to make the other fellows sit up," he broke out.

The remark was quite inconsequent, but to Phil's mind the connection was clear. Success in school would be the first step towards the abolition of his mother's washing-board; and in order to attain that success he dared not distract his thoughts by inopportune misgivings and futile regret. Nevertheless, he was glad of the despondent mood through which

he had passed. It had served a distinct purpose. It had enabled him to lay his hand on the nondescript discontent which had dogged him awake and asleep ever since he left home, the feeling of a disloyal selfishness. He had, as it were, rescued himself into port, while his dear ones were struggling in mid-ocean on a precarious plank or two. While he had been with them, had partaken of their discomforts, he had been too much occupied with his own share of them to leave much room or time for sympathy with theirs. But now that his heart was vacant and at leisure, it seemed bent on making up for its indifference by an acuter sensitiveness, which hardly knew its object or motive. Phil had set it right at last. He would feel for them—ah! yes; but his feeling would have a distinct and sacred place all to itself, so that it might not clash with his other interests of life and get hurt.

"It does me a lot of good to talk with you," he told Effie.

"I am glad," she replied, without any attempt at coquetry.

"But you mustn't forget a little stroking now and then."

When Mrs. Duveen kissed Phil "good night" that evening, he for the first time and, therefore, much to her surprise returned the salute. But he did not tell her why; the reason might have taken some of the value out of the compliment. And, besides, he would not betray Effie. For the same reason, too, it was, that, when two days afterwards, the wiry-looking, keen-eyed head-master asked him for his name, Phil, with something that sounded like pride, made answer: "Philip Lipcott Duveen, sir."

CHAPTER XIII

"I TELL you it's a perfect disgrace; what do you say, Diamond?"

"Becky, my dear, you know I always say as you say," replied Mr. Diamond readily.

"The whole neighborhood is talking about it," continued Mrs. Diamond, flourishing her arms. "To think of a Jewish boy with respectable parents—one of them unfortunately deceased—idling about the streets, picking up all manner of wickedness, and getting into ruffianly ways. . . ."

"I haven't noticed any ruffianly ways about Leuw," interposed Mrs. Lipcott quietly.

"Not yet, of course, but give him time to show off. I never heard of such a thing. Why don't you 'prentice him to some honest trade where he'd be out of mischief; am I right or not, Diamond?"

"Perfectly right, Becky, my dear," Mr. Diamond hastened to affirm.

"I think Leuw knows what he is about," said Mrs. Lipcott, quietly as before.

"He knows, but you don't. Of course, I'm just the last person to interfere in anybody else's business, but I always like to do my duty, eh, Diamond?"

"Most certainly you do, Becky, my dear."

"Well, then, it's just like this," went on Mrs. Diamond, glaring at Mrs. Lipcott, "I'm responsible for you all to my dear friend, Mrs. Duveen. Now my dear friend, Mrs. Duveen, is going to bring up your

Phil for her own son; and I'll never be able to hold my head up, if your Phil's brother is going to be a loafer and a vagabond. . . ."

"Mrs. Diamond!" cried Mrs. Lipcott, her meek eyes suddenly ablaze with anger.

"There, there, don't jump down my throat," said Mrs. Diamond deprecatingly. "Anybody would think I said he was born to be hanged. Now, wouldn't you, Diamond?"

"I certainly would, Becky, my dear," said the echo, leaving the real point of the question in doubt.

"And I'm only putting you on your guard, so that you shouldn't have to reproach yourself with anything later on. Fancy a bit of a boy like that going where he likes and doing what he likes. I don't suppose you did that at his age, Diamond, or I don't think you'd have been my husband."

Mr. Diamond thought he wouldn't. Mrs. Diamond was of opinion that the tone in which he said it ought to have contained a trifle more apprehension at so terrible a possibility, and made a mental note to bring the matter up for exhaustive discussion at the earliest convenient occasion.

"He always tells me everything he's been at during the day," said Mrs. Lipcott. Mrs. Diamond shrugged her shoulders.

"Everything—except what he leaves out. How can you know? I consider it my bounden duty"—Mrs. Diamond's voice became quite solemn—"to warn you against letting him become a disgrace to my very dear friend, Mrs. Duveen; am I right. . . ."

"But what can I do?" broke in Mrs. Lipcott, beginning to be impressed in spite of herself. "He's

made up his mind against going for a 'prentice. Perhaps you might talk to him."

"God forbid," ejaculated Mr. Diamond hastily.

"That's a good idea," said Mrs. Diamond, ignoring his protest. "Send him round."

"Becky, I don't think you ought to rob a mother of the privilege of reproving her own child," remarked Mr. Diamond sanctimoniously.

"Fiddlesticks," snapped Mrs. Diamond. "Send him round, I say."

Mrs. Lipcott went home struggling bravely against her misgivings. Suppose, after all, there was something in Mrs. Diamond's raven's croak. Everything considered, Leuw was little more than a child; and he had set himself to wrestle with that most merciless of foes, the streets of a great city. Perhaps they might become too strong for him—overpower him with their temptations, snare his soul in their treacherous ambushes, crush his heart in their stony embrace. True, as she had said, so far she had seen no sign of it; but that perhaps only meant that the evil influences were taking deeper and more insidious root. The thought spurred her to frantic haste, as though it depended on mere speed of foot to catch up and avert the impending disaster.

Leuw certainly appeared innocent and conscience-easy enough, as she came upon him at the mouth of Narrow Alley.

"What's the hurry, mother?" he asked, looking at her with the large honest eyes which had been Dulcie's special discovery in him.

Mrs. Lipcott forced herself into calmness before she replied with some random explanation; then she

gave him the message from the Diamonds, without adding its particular purpose, and feeling all the time as though she had joined some conspiracy against her child. Leuw expressed no astonishment at being sent for, because he had been to the Diamonds' several times for odd jobs, such as brushing Mr. Diamond's wardrobe, or running an errand, with the result of additional sixpences to the Lipcott exchequer. And so the message found Leuw ready and willing to obey; despite her assurance that it was no urgent case, it was only with difficulty that his mother prevailed on him to snatch a hasty bite and gulp before starting. Still, this hastiness did not prevent him from noting and wondering at her apologetic demeanor.

"Come in, come in," said Mrs. Diamond, as Leuw poked his head in at the door. Leuw came in. At his entry Mr. Diamond crouched back into his arm-chair, crumpled himself up to the smallest size possible, and spread out his evening paper to act as a screen between himself and the rest of the room, making it evident that he did not wish to participate in the proceedings about to take place. He always thought there was something uncanny and mysterious about Leuw; he was a plain, straightforward man himself, and had no taste for dabbling in mysteries. If his wife cared about it . . .

Hark! This was her voice. The battle had commenced. Mr. Diamond tried to make himself still smaller! But strange! her words were addressed to himself, not to Leuw.

"I'm going out for ten minutes," she was saying. "You just see to him, Diamond."

Mr. Diamond grinned fatuously at his wife's little

joke, then the door slammed. Mr. Diamond looked up startled; he and Leuw were alone in the room.

"Becky, Becky," shouted Mr. Diamond, rushing frantically out into the passage.

"Coward," hissed Mrs. Diamond; "d'you funk a little boy like that?"

"Yes, but I don't know what to say to him," whined Mr. Diamond.

"Say whatever you like. Only make it strong. Understand what I mean? Strong."

And presently Mr. Diamond found himself back in the room, with a feeling of having to choose between the devil and the deep sea.

Leuw had expressed no surprise at the peculiar scene; he never expressed surprise at anything. It appeared to him that, in betraying his state of mind to people, he was giving away something for which they had not paid value, and which was consequently an extravagance. Mr. Diamond profited by his indifference to get a clear grasp of the situation. Here was a choice between being blackguarded by young Leuw or risking the tender mercies of his wife.

He chose the latter, because he held it the height of philosophy to obtain the longest possible respite from trouble. Besides, he knew exactly how far his wife would go; she dared not kill him, because she would not be entitled to her full widow's pension for another three years. In Leuw's case there were no such considerations, but there were reports of his hasty temper which were most alarming. Mr. Diamond was not a coward, as his wife had suggested; but he loved himself dearly. And a task which even his wife fought shy of was surely not cut to his measure.

With a benign smile he beckoned Leuw to a chair, and mumbling an apology resumed his paper. Leuw was quite content to sit still, because, although he had pretty well found his "street legs" by now, a day's work was a day's work. The silence continued for ten minutes; then it struck Leuw that, as there seemed nothing on hand, he might as well be sitting at home, keeping his mother company; so he spoke:

"Is there anything you want me to do, Mr. Diamond?"

"Presently, presently," murmured Mr. Diamond, bending over his paper in an attitude of utter abstraction.

Leuw permitted the "presently" to rank as a period of five minutes by the clock opposite, and at its termination repeated his question.

"Eh—who—what's that?" cried Mr. Diamond distractedly, looking round him like a man wrested from deep slumber. "Oh! you still here? Let me see: Anything for you to do? No, no, no, I don't think so. Thank you all the same for calling to ask. Good night, my boy." And again the newspaper claimed him.

Leuw considered for a moment or two whether or not to investigate this strange behavior. He decided on the negative; probably the whole thing was due to a misunderstanding of his mother. So he politely returned the "good night," and walked out.

Outside the door he almost collided with Mrs. Diamond.

"Oh! I was just coming in," she said, with some confusion. "Well, I'm glad you took it so quietly, at any rate."

"Took what quietly?"

"What Mr. Diamond said to you."

"But he didn't say anything. He was reading the paper the whole of the time."

"Oh, was he? Well, it doesn't matter at all. You needn't wait."

Leuw was simply too much amazed to make any remonstrance at his abrupt dismissal.

When he was half-way down the stairs, the sound of Mrs. Diamond's voice came trailing after him stridently indistinct. There was going to be a rumpus. Leuw wondered if it was about the thing that didn't matter. He might easily find out by going back; but listening at keyholes was not in his line, despite Mrs. Diamond's bright example. So he hurried to get out of all possible earshot, only to defeat his own ends. For, as he got into the street, Mrs. Diamond's words banged full against his ear through the open front room window.

"Why I didn't take the job myself? I suppose you wanted him to cut my throat with one of your slaughter knives. Didn't you see him staring black murder. . . ."

Here the window came down with a crash, amputating the rest of the sentence. Leuw made for home without any further waste of time. He was sure now that his mother's message was due to no delusion. His certainty was confirmed by her glance of expectancy as he entered.

"Ain't they a bit too old for having a game with people?" he said carelessly, jerking his head Diamondward.

"I'm sure they meant it for the best," said Mrs. Lipcott, anxiously conciliating.

"Dare say they did, if I only knew what."

And then by question and answer it was elicited that Leuw's call had been futile. Mrs. Lipcott learnt it with dismay. Having persuaded herself that Mrs. Diamond's eloquence would prevail upon Leuw to choose another and more supervised occupation, she had during his absence allowed her apprehension at his danger, already violently set agog, to grow into a full swing. And now it depended on her own scant powers of argument to set her heart at rest again. Well, she could but try. Leuw listened to her attentively; she could always count on that much from Leuw. And when he made no immediate reply to her tale, she became rather hopeful of success.

"What do you think about it yourself?" asked Leuw finally.

"Oh! I'm not afraid," she prevaricated; "but you see when the whole neighborhood talks . . ."

"Well, as long as you're satisfied, we'll let it talk, eh, mother?"

Mrs. Lipcott said yes, but she looked no; and Leuw saw which way the wind was blowing. He moved closer to her.

"You've known me quite a long time, ain't you, mother?"

Mrs. Lipcott could not repress a smile at the quaint query.

"And I've been a good sort of boy mostly, ain't I, mother?" continued Leuw, with an emphasis on the concluding refrain.

"Not mostly—always," was the earnest reply.

"And the neighborhood wants to make you think I've got tired of being good. Don't you fret, mother;

it's only what the neighborhood says about everybody else, too. It wouldn't be a neighborhood if it didn't."

Mrs. Lipcott made a gesture, which might be either assent or dissent, with the chances in favor of the former.

"Why, I've got no time to go bad," said Leuw hopefully; "the day's only just long enough to sell clean out. And I don't like to take any remnants back to Christopher."

Anxiously he looked for the effect of his words, but Mrs. Lipcott's head drooped low. Leuw became alarmed; he had not thought his mother would need so much convincing. He changed his tactics.

"Well, if you very much want me to, I'll go into 'prentice. But I've got the horrors of the workshop. Didn't you always say it killed father?"

"That it did," said Mrs. Lipcott with a shudder. Leuw took courage from the shudder.

"Now, suppose I gave you my word; would that be any good to you?"

Mrs. Lipcott sat up resolutely. "No, Leuw, don't give me your word, I don't deserve it; I am a foolish woman that doesn't know her mind for five minutes at a time. It's all right, Leuw; we'll let 'em talk."

"And they only meant it for the best," added Leuw, rendered magnanimous by his victory.

This colloquy was a memorable one for Leuw, inasmuch as in time to come he could look back on it as the last occasion on which his right of initiative was challenged.

For the present, however, he thought it due to himself to investigate the hidden causes of this attempt to bully him into submission. He did not anticipate

much difficulty in the search, because, as a matter of fact, he had for guide a conjecture that almost amounted to certainty.

"Going out again?" said Mrs. Lipcott.

"Only for a mouthful of fresh air," replied Leuw casually.

A sudden fear struck Mrs. Lipcott. "Leuw, you're not going over to Mrs. Diamond's?"

"Not if I know it. She'd ask me to sweep up what's left of Mr. Diamond."

Leuw sauntered leisurely out of Narrow Alley into the main street. Here he had to curtail his strides still more, for he was in the midst of chaos that yelled and wriggled and tumbled about him in male and female atoms of humanity. The scene was chiefly instructive in showing the infinite gradations of smallnesses through which one must pass on the road to adolescence. The shrill-voiced turmoil had reached the fever-heat, which always heralded the impending break-up. Already there were sounds of lamentations as recalcitrant offspring were being fished out of the tumult, and hauled home to bed by solicitous mothers, who had spent the evening pleasurably if not profitably in talking scandal on the door-steps.

Skilfully utilizing the gaps left by these removals—he was not conceited enough to think they were due to a kindly consideration for his convenience—Leuw at last managed to reach Dunk's Row. It was hither that the more serious and sober-minded of the local young hopefuls repaired nightly to study the laws of hazard by practical experiments with buttons, marbles, and other articles of current value.

There was a report that these last included the

humbler coins of the realm, but in most quarters this was looked upon only as a clumsy attempt to give the locality a fictitious reputation for wealth. Here, too, Leuw was certain of finding Yellow Joe, whom he wished to take the opposite side in the argument about to ensue.

Yellow Joe was there right enough, but he was "out of it," that is, he was not playing, having lost all his available capital. It did not argue well for the reputation he enjoyed among his comrades for fair dealings that he was not allowed to play "owings." It was likewise impossible for him to obtain a loan without placing a heavy security, which, however, as a rule, only shifted the impossibility one degree back.

"Hullo, Joe," said Leuw, shaving against him rather closely.

Yellow Joe turned sharply. "That's my shoulder," he snapped.

"Keep it," Leuw snapped back.

Yellow Joe meditated. Dunk's Row saw very little of Leuw.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want to know if you're the neighborhood," replied Leuw, gazing at him hardily.

"Don't come any o' your cannon and drums on me at this time o' night," said Yellow Joe, his whole attention seemingly riveted on the game.

"You know what I mean, all the same," insinuated Leuw.

"No, I—well done, Moey, got him again," shouted Joe.

Leuw waited a moment for Yellow Joe's enthusiasm at Moey's achievement to cool down.

"I said you know what I mean," he then repeated.

"Oh, is that what you said? It was worth saying twice."

Leuw's patience broke. "Who told his mother lies about somebody, and whose mother went and told Mrs. Diamond?"

Joe appeared to consider the matter; then he turned Leuw gently by the shoulder.

"See that lamp-post there?" he asked, pointing.

"I ain't blind," said Leuw.

"Well, climb up to the top, and ask the gaslight. That'll tell you."

"I've asked it, and it said Yellow Joe."

Joe laughed artificially before he remarked: "And a jolly good job, too. What now?"

"What now? Nothing much. You'll just 'poller-gize to me before the whole bang lot."

So far little attention had been paid to the altercation, owing to the superior attraction of the game. But "apologize" was a word so rarely heard in those circles, and so much more rarely acted upon, that the novelty of the thing asserted itself. It was the above-mentioned Moey who asked what it was all about. Leuw laid the case before them. During his narrative bets were rapidly offered and taken on the chance of there being a fight; some of the hardier speculators even went so far as to risk a "double event" by wagering not only on the fight but also on the victor. Leuw, however, was favorite.

"But how d'you know it was him?" asked Moey, who was of the peace party.

"He just said so," replied Leuw.

"I didn't," repudiated Yellow Joe.

"Then let's go round to Mrs. Diamond and ask her," suggested Leuw.

But Yellow Joe, with an obstinacy which certainly seemed suspicious, refused this confrontation with Mrs. Diamond. Leuw took off his coat with a most formidable deliberation, while Moey and the rest of the peace party frantically clutched their brass buttons so as to enjoy one last lingering farewell of their darlings.

Yellow Joe, however, was still making up his mind. He knew Leuw's accusation was well founded. He had told his mother, and his mother had told Mrs. Diamond. Jealousy of Leuw's free lance life, as compared with his own hand and foot tied drudgery in the workshop, had prompted him. Leuw had heightened it by hinting to him of his intimate relations with old Christopher and the advantages accruing to him therefrom. It was galling to be outdone in enterprise by a mere Leuw Lipcott. Leuw Lipcott must be reduced to his own level; and Mrs. Diamond had great influence with Leuw's mother, and would be only too glad to exercise it. Had she succeeded? That he would know to-morrow.

"Go it, Joe," suddenly roared the war faction.

Ah! of course, meantime he was to fight; and with Leuw—with Leuw of the supernatural penetration, Leuw of the righteous cause, Leuw of the long arms and knuckly-looking fists. He didn't like it.

"Go it, he'll catch cold in his shirt sleeves," roared the war faction once more.

Yellow Joe liked it still less; Leuw was to keep himself warm by pummeling him. Desperately he grasped the lapels of his jacket preliminary to doffing

it. Then his face lit up with the brightness of a sudden idea—only to be darkened again presently by a scowl of sullen resignation, rendered more specious by the limp dropping of his hands.

"I don't care; he can hit me if he likes. I won't hit him back," he burst out.

Of course, the war faction wanted to know the reason why—in fact, insisted upon it rather fiercely.

Yellow Joe gave them a look—the sort of look with which the early martyrs probably tried to shame the lions in the arena.

"For why?" he echoed. "Because he's a Jew and I'm a Jew; and the man what preached last Sabbath in our synagogue said we got quite enough hard knocks from the Christians without banging each other about."

A howl of derision from the war faction greeted the explanation, and even the peace party, while admiring its ingenuity, had to admit that it was scarcely strong enough to meet the exigencies of the occasion. All eyes were turned on Leuw, with whom rested the further developments of the case.

Leuw responded by demanding his coat back from his second and putting it on again amid a hush of expectation. He broke it by saying:

"You're quite right, Joe; we oughtn't to bang each other about. Good-night."

He walked off rapidly, and left silence in his place; until Moey spoke up, saying it wasn't fair, and they ought never to have betted on such a thing. As regarded himself, he would never take the forfeit to which he was entitled by the terms of the betting. Fired by his noble example, the rest of the peace party

also agreed to remit their due—a remission which the war faction accepted with rather shameless alacrity.

Yellow Joe looked round and found himself alone. What had happened? There had been no fight, and he had had no licking. But all the same he felt that Leuw had once more had the best of him. Probably the others had gone after him to tell him so.

And then Yellow Joe slunk off home sore and chafing, but comforting himself with the knowledge—acquired by bitter experience—that your luck must turn if you only play long enough.

He would play Leuw a little longer.

CHAPTER XIV

It was now five weeks since Leuw had established himself as a bonâ-fide man of business. The board and lodging rates, which, as arranged, he paid his mother, enabled the household to steer an easier course and to keep clear of "chalk" at the tradesmen's. The landlord, too, was beginning to hold up the Lipcotts as a model of punctual solvency to the remaining tenants.

During the time Leuw had naturally seen a great deal of old Christopher Donaldson. In their more introspective moments they were themselves surprised at the degree of intimacy to which they had attained. Leuw ascribed it readily to the unifying influence of Sol Myers, whose name was never very far from their talk. But old Christopher, while admitting Sol Myers as a fortunate accident, thought there must be some more subtle cause which reached down to the very root of the matter; and the mystery of it worried him greatly. He discarded theory after theory, till at last, the evening which followed the abortive encounter between Yellow Joe and Leuw, he greeted the latter on his entry with an excited:

"I've got it, boy!"

"Have you?" asked Leuw eagerly, tumbling at once to old Christopher's drift.

"Yes, got it," reiterated the old man, rubbing his hands gleefully; "it's because me and you are first cousins sort of."

Leuw looked blankly disappointed. He had hoped for a more feasible suggestion, and Christopher's discovery did not carry conviction on the face of it.

"You don't see it?" asked Christopher, simply gloating over his perplexity. "Wait a minute. What are you? A 'Ebrew. What am I? A Scotchman what Lunnon has got hold on, and made a blessed cockney to the very tip of his tongue—the Lord forgive me for it. Well, d'you see now?"

"I think I'm just beginning to," temporized Leuw.

"Now, look here, boy." The admonition was unnecessary, because Leuw was already staring at him as hard as he could.

"It's my opinion as we Scotch folk is them Lost Ten Tribes what all the world's been looking for high and low ever since."

"By gum, I never thought of that," cried Leuw carried away by the boldness of the idea.

"And it gave my brains many a twist before I got to it, I can tell you," admitted Christopher.

"Now, what is the course of my argyment?" he continued. "I looked at the Scotchman, and I looked at the Jew. Hang me, says I to myself—they're baked in the same oven. The Scotchman's got a way of getting on mostly when he's made up his mind to it—so has the 'Ebrew. The Scotchman's steady and sober, not shipping more liquor nor what he can carry—so does the 'Ebrew. Now, how does that strike you for argyment?"

"There's a lot in it," replied Leuw, a little absently, because he was trying to work the thing out for himself, and also pursuing an idea of his own.

"I should think there was. There's a lot of can-

didates for the glory of being them Lost Ten Tribes; there's the English and the Welsh and folks over seas. But it's our'n right enough. Only being 'cute, we keep mum—don't brag about it. That's how we get God's blessing on the sly, as it were, being the seed of Abraham and prospering accordingly; and likewise don't get badgered about, like what you hear about your brother 'Ebrews in foreign parts, more's the shame."

"Yes—no," said Leuw, still deep in thought.

"More's the shame," echoed Christopher. "There's a way of treating the people what invented the Book, and made the world a present of the patent! And then it goes and pokes fun at 'em for having long noses. Of course you must get a long nose if every jackanapes gives a pull at it whenever the fit takes him. And what does your 'Ebrew do? Gives a yell? Oh! no. He just takes no notice, biding his time, knowing as the longest lane must have a turning; and he's been through a long lane or two in his time, eh, boy?"

"He has," assented Leuw, to whom the history of his people was no closed book.

"Yes, that's what he's special good at—keeping of himself quiet and well-behaved," continued Christopher's reflections; "quiet and well-behaved. And I am not the only one what says so. Ask the coroners and the police. D'you remember what these places hereabouts was like forty odd years ago? Of course you don't; but I do. It was just like old Beelzebub had taken the lid off hell, and had let all his pet sinners out for a holiday. There wasn't a night passed without some shindy or murder or mutilation down

one of those alleys, and no 'copper' before starting night duty thought of ordering next morning's breakfast, because he wasn't sure he'd be there to eat it. And just thenabouts you 'Ebrews began to show up, dribbling in at first one by one, and then more and more, and by and by whole shoals of 'em—well, God knows how they worked it, but presently all the wickedness began to scurry away like rats when the daylight shines in through the pantry-window—the devil knows where it scurried to—and then things became quiet and nice and respectable, and I left off sleeping at nights behind the counter and sold my six-shooter—oh! yes, that's what you 'Ebrews did for Spitalfields, and I'd just like the bloke what pops up every session with a bill against this 'ere Alien Immigration to make a note of it. All of which goes to prove, if you look at it in the proper way, as Scotchmen and 'Ebrews is first cousins by right of Auld Lang Syne."

"Strikes me," said Leuw, who by this time had worked out his idea, "strikes me that if the Scotchies and the Jews was to put their heads together, they'd make the world sit up—don't you think so?"

Old Christopher, treating the suggestion as a joke and wishing to humor Leuw, threw back his head preparatory to one of his rafter-shaking guffaws. In the process, however, he caught a glimpse of Leuw's grave, nay, anxious face, and his jaws shut again with a snap. He paused to consider the matter in its new light.

"It'd be a good thing—if it could be managed—a good thing," he declared solemnly.

"Yes," said Leuw and was about to continue when apparently he changed his mind, and wound up instead with a rather abrupt:

"Good night, I must get home."

"Good night, cousin Leuw," replied Christopher.

Leuw sent back a tremulous smile in acknowledgment of the allusion and hurried on; while Christopher betook himself once more to the tinkering up of his old toys, scratching his head and feeling uncomfortable beneath the burden of a new problem, which might prove more obstreperous than the one he had just solved with so much tribulation of mind.

Leuw's progress homeward was interrupted, just as he was crossing the High Street, by the sight of a penny museum which had opened business that evening. He "walked up"—to use the strictly technical expression—but only to where he could view at easy range the posters, which, by the mere stridency of their coloring, seemed to cry out shame on all doubts as to the genuineness of the miracles within. He had a fugitive idea that it would be nice and colleague-like to give a fledgeling concern the encouragement of his custom; but then he was hardly yet in a position to permit himself the luxury of expensive amusements. And besides, the pictures gave one so high an expectation, that possibly the originals might not come up to them; and it would certainly be in the truer interests of the show to avoid being disappointed in it.

Nevertheless, to eschew any untoward temptation, Leuw turned sharply away. The sharp turn caused him to collide with a youth about his own age, who, with a companion, was devouring the poster depicting the two-horned chicken.

"Who are you ashovin' of?" demanded the other half of the collision unamiably.

"I'm very sorry—I didn't mean to," apologized Leuw.

"Didn't mean to? What do you want to get into people's way for? Why don't you pack up and go back to your own country?"

The companion here interposed with a snort of disgust.

"Question to ask!" he jeered. "Why 'e don't go back to 'is country? Don't you know as a bloomin' Jew ain't got no bloomin' country?"

"Thought as they lived in a place called Jerus'lem," said the first speaker.

"They did, till they got kicked out for not behavin' o' theirselves properly."

Leuw listened quietly to the duologue, deliberating whether to go away, or, if not, what attitude to take up. The first alternative was safer, but it would leave a stain on the national 'scutcheon for which he would afterwards have to deal with his conscience. No, he would stay and see the thing out. He faced the two squarely.

"Oh! no—you're quite wrong," he said. "We weren't kicked out. Only Jerusalem was getting too small for us, so we came out to buy up the whole world to do with what we liked. We've got about a quarter of it already."

His defiance in mien and voice flabbergasted the two anti-Semites—but not for long.

"Bli' me, Bill, did you 'ear that?" asked the first of them.

"Crickey, there's cheek for you!" exclaimed the second. "If I was you, Slimy, I'd knock that ugly old cocoanut of 'is'n into the gutter."

"Go it, give 'im what for," said the museum manager encouragingly.

A fight meant a crowd; and a crowd was the very thing he wanted about his establishment.

"Bill, see 'e don't cut and run while I take my coat off," shouted Slimy.

The admonition, however, was quite unnecessary. Leuw made no move to escape. He had expected this, in fact, had brought it upon himself wilfully and knowingly. It was quite a coincidence to be embroiled in a fight on two successive evenings. Only this time it was coming off in earnest. Well, could one wish for anything better than to strike for the glory of one's people? The showman smirked delightedly; the anticipated crowd was beginning to collect. The rampant Slimy was exchanging a few preliminary spars with the air, when a stentorian voice said:

"Now, then, Slimy Nipper—up to your pranks again? Clear, or I'll . . ."

That was as far as the voice got, for the Slimy Nipper had disappeared with the speed which, for marvelousness, could give all the exhibits of the grumbling showman a long start and an easy beating.

"Lucky I came up," said the constable good-naturedly to Leuw. "He'd have punched a hole right through you."

Leuw walked off, not at all grateful for what the constable called his luck. He felt as if somebody had wrapped him up in cotton wool, and had put him away in a safe place. What consoled him somewhat was that he had probably escaped a black eye; and black eyes would have given a fillip to his mother's allayed

suspicious, and he had an idea that his people could more comfortably bear another insult or two than his mother the pang of a fresh uncertainty.

As Leuw, next morning, sallied out of Narrow Alley on his way to business, he almost ran into Yellow Joe's arms.

"Hullo, Joe," he cried cheerily. "Been waiting for me long?"

"Who says I've been waiting for you?" growled Yellow Joe, somewhat disconcerted, however. And then, mumbling unintelligibly, he quickly crossed over to the other side.

Leuw gave a ringing laugh, not of derision but of amusement. It was certainly comical to see Yellow Joe play the injured innocent. Leuw had quite forgiven him. To harbor resentment against a person like Yellow Joe was an absurd waste of energy. Briskly he stepped out, and in another moment or two had walked Yellow Joe clean out of his head. When he reached Christopher's shop he found it still closed; so he planted himself with his back to the door, and announced his presence by a succession of vigorous heel-taps. At the same time his glance roved idly down the street. Suddenly he gave a start, and his rubadub came to an abrupt stop. On the other side of the street, a little way down, stood a dray cart; and from behind the dray cart Leuw thought he saw Yellow Joe peeping at him. However, the crowds of people passing in both directions made his impression very uncertain; moreover, he was only vouchsafed a momentary glimpse, for the peeping head disappeared at the first sign of having attracted attention. Leuw had half made up his mind to go over

and see, when the "stump, stump" of Christopher inside the shop aroused him to the superior claims of wage-earning over the unprofitable gratification of an idle curiosity.

Leuw was a little surprised at Christopher's unwonted taciturnity towards him, which continued for the next two or three days; but ascribing it to some mood of the old man with which he had not previously made acquaintance, he passed it over without comment. Least of all did he connect the cause of it with himself. But, as a matter of fact, Christopher's chariness of speech was due to his hard tussle with the problem which Leuw had foisted upon him a few evenings back. He knew that a simple question to Leuw would dispose of it at once, but he preferred taxing his own powers of perception—just by way of mental exercise. He had made some headway already; he hoped to come to the bottom of it by the middle of the following week.

Meanwhile, however, something else occurred which had to be attended to at once. A communication reached Christopher which had to be answered. He answered it, somewhat peculiarly, by asking Leuw one morning to take charge of the shop, as he himself was going out for the day.

"Anything happened?" enquired Leuw.

"What do you expect to happen? I'm taking a day off, that's all," replied Christopher.

"But there's Sunday," pointed out Leuw.

"I know there is; only I want to see what a week-day holiday feels like."

Leuw looked the reluctance he felt. Not that he was unwilling to do his friend a favor, but the idea

of having the shop under his unqualified control for a whole twelve hours made him uncomfortable.

Christopher was no penman, and so he kept no books, and took no stock of the thousand and one articles contained in the shop. It was really quite a big shop when one came to think of it. All these would be at Leuw's mercy, together with the till; for how was Christopher going to check the day's sales against any account Leuw chose to render him?

"What's the matter?" asked Christopher. "You shan't lose anything. I'll pay you half a crown for the job."

"It isn't that," said Leuw, and told him his real objection.

"That's my business," replied Christopher curtly.

After that, of course, Leuw could no longer refuse. He needed no instructions, because he had long ago acquired all the details of price, and could lay his hand on any required article with eyes shut. Soon he was busy. What surprised him greatly was the taking capacity of the shop, the extent of which he had never suspected. By midday five shillings and two-pence had come in, and by tea-time the returns had swollen to nine and eight. Leuw enjoyed the feeling of responsibility to the full. Once or twice he had even got so far as to imagine that this prosperous concern was all his own, till the entrance of a customer and an enquiry into the meaning of Mr. Donaldson's absence ruthlessly shattered his illusion. If Christopher were only sharp enough to catch at the hint which Leuw had thrown out to him the other night, and which Leuw had lacked courage to put into plainer terms! It would certainly have made him happier to

know that, although Christopher was not sharp enough at the time, he had put his mind to the grindstone ever since.

True to his word, Christopher returned punctually at closing time. Leuw eagerly held out to him the list of items he had jotted down as each was sold. But Christopher waved it aside, and somewhat portentously took out of his pocket a square-folded piece of paper.

"It's answered now," he said.

"What is?" asked Leuw, gazing at him astonished.

"This is. Read." And Christopher thrust the paper into his hands. It was scrawled over with hand-printed characters, evidently intended to throw the scent off their origin, and they said:

"Beware of a party what calls himself Leuw Lipcott. He ain't no good. He does you brown right and left, which he brags of it to the other boys, helping himself to whatever he can lay his hands on, and once he stole a suvring from the money-box when you wasn't looking. Chuck him or you're a rooned man."

Leuw read it to the end, and looked up at Christopher without a tremor.

"Found it on the counter yesterday dinner time," explained Christopher. "and this was my little way of answering it."

"Oh! Mr. Donaldson," exclaimed Leuw.

Christopher held up his hand warningly. "No, none of that! It's done with. Here's your half-crown and be off, or I'll fall asleep standing. Greenwich Park hills all day is too much for a man with only one leg. I say, you can have this, too, if you like."

Leuw took the anonymous letter and went. He was so much impressed by old Christopher's drastic way of settling the incident that he did not give a thought to what course of action he should adopt against his would-be defamer. Indeed, the question only came home to him when he saw Yellow Joe hanging about the mouth of Narrow Alley. Of course he would be there, thought Leuw, to see how the thing had gone off. But Leuw's first impulse was to rush up to the anonymous correspondent and thank him effusively; he argued that if a man does you a good turn, it does not matter that his intentions were bad. Then the humorous aspect of the case struck him; he would at least have a little fun with Yellow Joe. So, assuming a woe-begone mien, he turned the corner of the Alley in ostentatious disconsolateness.

"What's the matter, old pard?" enquired Joe sympathetically.

"I'm done for," moaned Leuw.

"What's up now?"

"That old bloke I used to deal with has given me the kick; won't trust me any more. Said I was a thief. Now you know I ain't a thief, don't you, Joe?"

"Never heard anybody say anything against you that way," replied Joe, trying to find out what made the street-lamp flicker so.

"But he might take me on again if I brought him a character from somebody," went on Leuw. "Where am I to get it from? Now, if you're a friend of mine, Joe, you'll do me a favor and write a couple of lines, and I'll say they're from a Reverend, eh?"

"My writing ain't good enough," said Joe.

"Oh, you needn't write it, you can print it, you know," was the quick reply.

From merely flickering, the street-lamp seemed all at once to break out into a fantastic dance.

"The idea!" quavered Joe. "Printing! He'd find out in a minute."

"Well, then, the least you might do is to put your name to this, and say it's all bunkum."

Joe cast a glance at his handiwork with which Leuw suddenly confronted him, gave a yell, and took to his heels. With a smile of self-congratulation Leuw walked on. But he had hardly cleared the Alley entrance, when he felt a sharp tug at his shoulder. He turned and saw Yellow Joe's eyes gleaming strangely into his own.

"You'll be the death o' me one of these days," he heard him gasp at the same time.

"Oh! How's that?"

"You'll make me bu'st with yer quizzin'. Why don't yer get in a wax with me and have me locked up?"

"What? A Jew lock up a Jew for wanting to do him harm? Not I."

"Well, then, if you won't lock me up, p'raps"—Joe stammered—"p'raps you'll shake hands with me."

"That I'll do," replied Leuw. And he did.

"You might do something else."

"What's that?"

"Give me back my—my letter."

Leuw stole at him a quick glance of suspicion. "What d'you want it for?"

"To look at when I feel spiteful ag'inst anybody," replied Yellow Joe.

Leuw handed it to him without a word. Equally silently Joe took it and departed. When Leuw finally

got to his supper that evening, he felt he had worked unusually hard to deserve it. For, in addition to the day's honest toil, had he not rubbed the world cleaner of just one speck of evil?—which is a great achievement even for the greatest of men. He thought of the strengthening of the tie between himself and Christopher, the result of Yellow Joe's iniquitous designs; he also thought of Yellow Joe's newly-found grace and contrition, the outcome of a half-hearted jest. And he concluded the Great Power which ordered the tangled courses of the stars showed almost greater by guiding the crooked bent of the petty human brain to a straight issue.

It is true that Christopher had timed himself to arrive at the solution of his problem by the middle of the week following. But whether he had had an inspiration, or whether his outing had shaken up his latent faculties, he was able to greet Leuw next morning—a Friday—with the information that he had something very special to say to him that afternoon. The season was now the beginning of autumn, and the Sabbath came in pretty early. So Leuw presented himself at the shop a little after five, hoping that Christopher's "something very special" would not detain him long, as he did not care to miss Evening Service at the synagogue. Without it he hardly felt complete; for it was in the little sanctuary that he best seemed able to find and collect himself, bit by bit, as it were, after the dizzying turmoil of the working week. But when Christopher motioned him into the little laboratory behind, he knew that the interview was likely to be a lengthy one.

"Sit down," directed Christopher, at the same time

seating himself to face Leuw. He began by saying nothing, but by favoring Leuw with a protracted and sort of wiseacre stare across the breadth of the table. Leuw sat as for his photograph.

"I thought I'd get to it at last," finally observed Christopher, with a knowing shake of the head.

"Get to what?" of course enquired Leuw.

"The other day, talking about Jews and Scotchmen you happened to remark—not by accident neither—that if the two was to put their heads together they'd do great things."

Leuw started up, but Christopher hushed him with a wave of his hand, and continued:

"Now, you're a Jew and I'm a Scotchman, and you thought as we might try the idea on a small scale."

Leuw flushed up. "Beg your pardon, Mr. Donaldson—I know it was awful cheek . . ."

"Silence!" roared Christopher. "And, what's more, I've made up my mind to try it. From next Monday this 'ere concern starts as Donaldson & Lipcott, or the other way round if you like. And the terms is: half profits to the penny."

"I won't take it, Mr. Donaldson," cried Leuw hotly; "it's robbing you!"

"Well, I can get myself robbed of my own money, if I like, can't I?" shouted back Christopher. "But don't think you'll only just have to put your hand in my pocket and take it out again. You'll have to work your level best for it; mind that."

"It isn't fair," remonstrated Leuw. "You give everything, and what d'you get from me?"

"I get your brains, and that's the best capital of all, because it's current coin everywhere. It's no use,

Leuw, you can't choke me off, I know what I'm about; and if you contradict me again, I'll jolly well court-martial you for insubordination."

Leuw did not contradict, because he was growing quite dumb as the full drift of Christopher's offer came borne upon him.

Christopher noticed it, and, in order to give him time to recover, discussed the arrangement in a practical, matter-of-fact sort of way that was most reassuring. And presently Leuw joined in, sparingly at first, then more volubly, until he ousted Christopher altogether, and let his schemes, hopes, and aspirations for the new venture break loose and run riot. Christopher listened smilingly; then he said:

"You're just a runaway young colt. Never mind, I'll know how to keep a taut bridle."

That sobered Leuw, and made him remember that it was wrong of him to keep all his joy to himself. He was much too late for synagogue, but he and his mother would that evening hold a thanksgiving service of their own, which would exalt their mean little dwelling-place to the rank and dignity of a golden-domed temple.

Christopher saw him as far as the door, holding his hand all the while; there he bent down and whispered confidentially:

"Don't you see? I've got to do something to get even with Syd Mitchell, or else he mightn't talk to me when we meet later on."

Leuw got home, at one stride, as it seemed to him, and stormed up the staircase as if to test what amount of ricketing it would really survive. As he bounded into the room, his mother faced him with a smiling trepidation that looked odd. What also puzzled him

was that the door of the scullery cupboard was flung back, exposing to view the odds and ends of household necessaries, a most unusual thing—especially on a Sabbath eve—to be countenanced by that model of order and tidiness whom he was privileged to call mother. Then he guessed.

“Phil’s behind there,” he exclaimed promptly.

With a joyous laugh at the failure of the surprise, Phil sprang forward into Leuw’s embrace. Leuw, however, drew back startled. Was this stylish young gentleman his erstwhile brother Phil? Phil noticed his hesitation, and also stopped short in pained wonder.

“Leuw, dear, won’t you have anything to do with me?” he quavered.

“Won’t I? See if I won’t,” cried Leuw, recovering himself. And by token of it his arms were round Phil’s neck, and his cheek kept glued against Phil’s cheek for the space of five seconds. That was manlier than kissing, besides serving the same purpose.

“May I tell now, mother?” asked Phil.

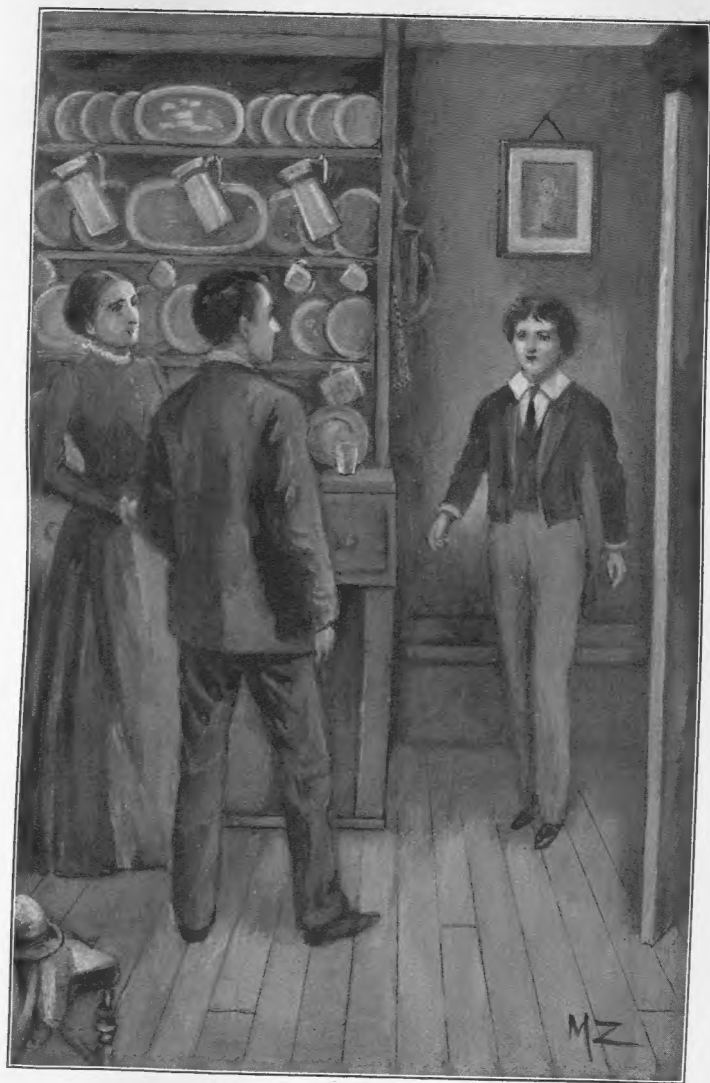
“Phil’s got some good news, and I thought he ought to keep it till we were all together,” explained Mrs. Lipcott.

Leuw looked gratefully at his mother and then expectantly at Phil. The latter took a deep breath.

“Well, I came out top in the entrance exam. and got the scholarship,” he murmured.

“Bravo, Phil, I knew you’d knock ’em,” shouted Leuw.

“Auntie sent me to tell you myself; she said it was too good for a letter,” went on Phil. “But it was mean of you—why haven’t you been to see me after all the asking?”



"LEUW, DEAR, WON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME?"

"We'll come right enough, all in good time," said Leuw thoughtfully. "And now it's my turn."

"What for?" asked Phil.

"D'you think you've bought up all the good news in the world?" asked Leuw with affected scorn. "I can also do a bit in that line. I've taken on a shop."

"Leuw!" exclaimed Mrs. Lipcott aghast.

And then Leuw, without further circumlocution, gave a detailed account of Christopher's magnanimity and all that it would mean to them. Of course he was listened to with rapt attention, especially by Phil, to whom this was the first intimation of Leuw's doings since they had seen each other last. All he could say on the matter was that his brother Leuw came up to his expectations. Mrs. Lipcott just lifted up her eyes to heaven and murmured:

"Thank God."

Leuw, who caught the two words in transit, thought they were a whole liturgy in themselves.

It was understood, of course, that Phil would spend the Sabbath with them. Mrs. Duveen did not expect him back till the following evening.

"I wish you had given me notice," said Mrs. Lipcott; "I'd have made something extra."

"I'm glad you didn't; it would have made me feel a stranger," said Phil quickly; and Leuw grunted approval.

"Oh! I forgot," said Phil suddenly during supper. "Dulcie wants to be specially remembered to you."

"Does she?" asked Leuw off-hand, wondering whether his flush looked as hot as it felt.

"And Effie wants to know you badly," continued Phil.

That, of course, led to an account of Effie, and Phil

became rather fluent over her. Leuw gave ear contentedly because Effie implied frequent allusions to Dulcie. It was rather a second-hand sort of business, he told himself; but it was better than nothing.

"Oh! yes, I'll come to see you, when I've got on a bit more," he said all at once, and apropos of nothing in particular. It sounded rather strange, and he asked himself angrily when he would get rid of the stupid habit of thinking aloud.

All next day it poured in torrents; but none of them minded. Phil, indeed, was rather glad, because it served him as an excuse for not parading himself, a thing he had anticipated with some apprehension. And, besides, the discomfort without made the room seem cosier, and sent the sense of their reunion tingling more gratefully through the hearts of its occupants.

Leuw alone saw Phil off to the railway station on the latter's way home.

"Good luck, Phil," said Leuw.

"God bless you, Leuw."

And as they gripped hands, the same thought struck them both, that this was not merely an ordinary leave-taking. They were doing more than bidding each other good-by; they were saying farewell to each other's childhood. So far, although they had taken themselves so seriously, they had only played at life; but now they had once and for all stowed away their toys in the great lumber-room of the world, the past. And the moist-eyed smile they exchanged at parting was the fittest legend they could write on the signposts of their ways: Regret for what they had lost and the compensating hope of the many things they had to strive for and to gain.